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JOURNEY

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MY ABYSSINIAN JOURNEY.

A JOURNEY THROUGH ABYSSINIA FROM THE RED SEA TO NAIROBI IN 1906 IN THE DAYS OF EMPEROR MENELIK.

BY

MAJOR JOHN BOYES, L.F.,

L.M.S.M., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

All profits from the sale of this Book will be devoted to the provision of Mobile Canteens for the Forces operating in Eastern Africa.

MY ABYSSINIAN JOURNEY.

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MAJOR JOHN BOYES, L.F., L.M.S.M., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S.

(Partly rewritten from The Company of Adventurers).

Author of :

JOHN BOYES, KING OF THE WAKIKUYU.

THE COMPANY OF ADVENTURERS.

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CHAPTER I.

NAIROBI TO DIRE DAOUA.

ABYSSINIA, Kenya's mysterious, self-contained, and little-known neighbour, had always possessed a fascination for me, and I had long hoped that some day the opportunity would come to explore the country far to the north of my earlier experiences in Africa.

When at length I made up my mind to journey into the unknown, the outlook was by no means good. I knew that with the limited funds at my disposal it was a gamble with fate, in which the penalty, if I failed, was certain bankruptcy. No one had a good word for my project. General opinion in Nairobi was dead against me. I was told that there was little chance of my getting to the border, six hundred miles away, across uninhabited and waterless wastes, or through tribes of hostile Natives, and that, should I succeed in my forlorn hope, it was most unlikely that the Abyssinians would permit me to cross their frontier.

Some useful help came from one or two sources. Prince de Chimay, a Belgian nobleman who was touring East Africa at the time, hearing of my proposed venture, asked if he might accompany me and offered his influence with the authorities. As it turned out, he was unable to come, but his co-operation at a critical time encouraged me, and is worthy of acknowledgment here.

A still more important factor was the advice and experience of Mr. W. N. (later Sir Northrup) McMillan, a well-known settler in Kenya Colony, who had travelled via Egypt and the Sudan into Abyssinia, and was a personal friend of the Emperor Menelik. A special permit from this august and dusky potentate was necessary to enter Abyssinia, and when a telegram arrived from Addis Ababa, its capital, saying, " Emperor has given leave for Boyes and companion trading expedition," I knew this gentleman's goodwill had translated itself into action. The companion referred to was the Prince de Chimay, who was staying with Mr. McMillan at the time.

However, I abandoned my plan of starting north overland from Nairobi—a change in my original programme which I never regretted —and decided to enter Menelik's country by sea via Mombasa and Jibouti. As it turned out, however, my change of plan resulted in a

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practical scheme which was within my compass, and enabled me to be the first trader to make the overland route from Addis Ababa to Nairobi and pioneer thereby a new trade route.

My main idea to make the expedition pay its way was to buy mules and horses, which, report informed me, could be obtained for from £2 to £5 each respectively in Abyssinia, but had a market value of £20 or £30 each in Nairobi. There was also the prospect of adding to my gains by hunting.

My first move was to transfer, through the agency of the National Bank of India, about £200 to the Bank of Abyssinia at Addis Ababa for my use on arrival; with a smaller sum in hand I proceeded to get together a minimum outfit. An assistant was essential, so I cast around for a man of the type to be relied upon to bear his share of the inevitable toil and hardships, and who would not mind roughing it, or periods of scanty food.

There was no lack of volunteers once the news had circulated around Nairobi that I was in earnest, and from the many applicants I selected a young Scandinavian, named Selland, who had worked before the mast and had had some years' experience of African life. He had taken part in several Native wars, besides going through the South African campaign. A good shot and a hard-working, conscientious type of man, he impressed me as being just the sort of companion I needed, and I booked him third class as a practical test of endurance before committing myself with him into the interior. Any time I prefer to be alone rather than put up with the grousings and incapacity of an unsuitable subordinate.

Necessity compelled me to cut my coat according to my cloth, and a man not willing to accept uncomplainingly the consequent frugality and risks that I was prepared to undergo myself in this adventure was of no use to me.

I gave Selland clearly to understand that it was purely a speculation. I was starting on a route entirely new to me, not knowing what luck I was going to have, or whether I should make anything out of the venture. It might be that I should return to Nairobi absolutely "broke," with no money to pay wages. Selland appreciated the risk, and was quite prepared to take the chances, leaving it to me to do the right thing by him. I never regretted taking him, for he came fully up to my estimation of him in every respect.

It soon proved that I had not under-estimated the difficulties of the undertaking. As no one understands Swahili in Abyssinia, there was the language difficulty, but I considered myself fortunate to pick up a Somali who said he had been through Abyssinia before and knew the language. I engaged him as guide and interpreter.

I left Nairobi for Jibouti towards the end of March, 1906, by the French steamer "Oxus," which carried a good many French passengers from Madagascar. Amongst them was an Italian priest, whom

I did not recognize and who did not know me, but when we began to talk I found he was the missionary to whom I had given my house and farm in the Kikuyu country when I left it. It was a pleasure to meet him, for I was naturally very much interested to know how things were going in the Kikuyu country. The mission, founded in this manner, was the first in the northern Kikuyu country and remains to this day an active centre of religious propaganda amongst the Wakikuyu.

During the sea passage I discovered that my Somali, Assan, a rather tall, thin man, with a hooked nose and typical Jewish features, was an inveterate gambler. His chief attainment was talking and, being gifted with an elastic imagination, he never tired of boasting of the great feats he had done and of the elephants and lions he had shot. Nor did he forget to tell me what a good man I was. These Somali are expert flatterers, and Assan might easily have deceived a less experienced person than myself, who had already gained a fair insight into Native character. Assan, like all Somali, was a Muhammadan. Among his companions on the boat was a man who had been a soldier in the French army and was returning home from Madagascar. He was a kind of half-bred Somali and Abyssinian. Assan introduced him to me as likely to be a valuable addition to the expedition and, as he had been under European discipline, I engaged him.

When we dropped anchor at Jibouti, a number of Native dhows, said to have been captured for gun-running, were lying in the harbour. Jibouti, a French port, consists of a small town, comprising a few European hotels, stores and other buildings. The Natives are mostly Muhammadan Somalis. The place gave me the impression that European influence had not yet made itself much felt; for dirt and crime prevailed, and only a few days before two Frenchmen while out shooting had been assassinated by the Natives a few miles north of the town. So far as I could make out, the Government had not moved in the matter, either to investigate the case or punish the murderers.

The physical aspect of the town might be summed up in three words—dry, sandy, and hot. The houses, except in one quarter, where there was a large Native population, were of the usual kind to be found in any Eastern country—two-storey buildings of white-washed stone. The hotels were built in the Continental style, with large verandahs on which little tables were set out. Numbers of carriages driven by Somali were standing or plying for hire. I did not ride in one, chiefly out of sympathy for the horses, which were so poor that they scarcely seemed to have strength to drag their load along. They were the poorest animals I have ever seen, consequent, I suppose upon there being no grazing and fodder being very expensive.

The railway is run by a French company, and was at that time conducted on very unbusinesslike lines, while the track was, to say the least of it, badly constructed. We were told that some part of it was scoured away after every shower of rain, and we were fortunate enough just to escape one of these washouts. The day after we reached Dire Daoua railhead, the line was washed away and all traffic stopped

for over a fortnight. The railway was then about three hundred kilometres in length, and what it lacked in comfort it made up in charges. I forget the exact fare, but I know that it was one of the most expensive railway journeys I have ever taken.

The familiarity of the Natives with the whites was very marked to anyone who had been in South or East Africa. I was travelling second-class, and in the same compartment there were two French ladies and a gentleman going up to Dire Daoua. A Somali got in and began to make a cigarette. A white man would never have thought of doing such a thing with ladies present, but no one seemed to take any notice. Shortly afterwards the white guard came in, and I thought to myself, " Now there's going to be a row, and I shall see Mr. Somali kicked out. " But nothing of the kind happened. The guard simply sat down by the Somali and asked him for a cigarette; they both lighted up and had a smoke together !

We left Jibouti rather early in the morning, and as we travelled along over the sandy track on which the railway was built, we noticed on both sides of the line Natives sleeping in holes scooped out of the sand, who, as the train thundered past, were awakened by its noise. First one and then another stood up in his sandy bed, and they presented a most peculiar spectacle with their startled black faces peering out of the white sheets in which they were enshrouded, reminding one of a number of corpses rising out of their graves, brought back to life and judgment by the last trump.

Leaving the sandy plain, the train entered a country of black volcanic rock, with scanty bushes dotted about here and there. I noticed a few Somali herding sheep and goats, and it was surprising how the latter managed to exist, for, except the bushes, there was not a vestige of vegetation to be seen. We probably viewed the country at the worst time of the year, it being just at the end of the dry season.

After this sterile belt we reached a more mountainous area, and at one station passed a camp of armed Abyssinians with the Abyssinian flag, yellow, red and green. I also caught a glimpse of a fort on the very topmost peak of a mountain, which I was informed belonged to the French and was the boundary between the French Protectorate and Abyssinia. The country beyond was more open, with better grazing, affording good pasturage for the mules, horses, and cattle herded on it.

We reached Dire Daoua at eight o'clock at night, and our first impression of its inhabitants was certainly not encouraging. We had brought with us a little basket of food to eat on the train, and on landing at the terminus we took the basket with us to the hotel. It was starlight when we arrived, and the unlighted streets were full of a motley crowd of Natives all shouting and talking. As we pushed our way through the crush to get to the hotel, thievish hands were thrust into the basket we were carrying, and it was not until we had shown our intention to let go with our fists right and left that we were

allowed to get through without losing anything. We were the focus of many black, threatening looks and, as most of the crowd were carrying guns or revolvers and ammunition, we were very glad to get clear without a fight. The contrast with the white man's rule in the Colony we had recently left caused me to remark to Selland that we were making a good start in Abyssinia. If this was the sort of thing to greet us on our arrival, what should we have to encounter before we got through the country? The crowd certainly looked a cut-throat lot. Whether there were any police amongst them we could not tell; if there were, it was impossible to distinguish them, and we were careful not to get embroiled in any disturbance.

It happened to be Saturday, and finding we could not get our baggage out that night, we went off to a small hotel kept by the ubiquitous Greek. It was a decent little place, better than we expected to find in such a town. Not being too flush of money, I did not want to stop at this place longer than I could help, for it is always expensive marking time in out-of-the-way spots; so I made inquiries and found that there was a British Consul, whose help I at once sought. He was a Greek, with a very scanty knowledge of English, but he had a Goanese clerk who proved of great assistance to us. These Goanese, as clerks, one finds all over Africa. I had already met many of them in German and British East Africa.

We told the Goan that we were anxious to secure our camping equipment, and he rendered us every help, turning out a capital fellow. The Consulate had received news of my coming, and I was able to get everything through duty free. Amongst other things I had a good elephant gun, a double-barrelled .450, which the Customs officers greatly admired.

During our stay in Jibouti, I had picked up another Somali, so that I had now Selland, two Somali and the French soldier. I put a man on guard and installed Assan as cook.

I had not been favourably impressed with Jibouti, but Dire Daoua was, if anything, worse. To a stranger it was hard to find out who was running the country. The French controlled the railway and the Abyssinians the Customs. The police seemed to govern the place, but in a very bad way, and I found that an Englishman who could speak no language but his own had a very poor time of it. From the way the Abyssinians dressed, almost every man wearing a bandolier and carrying a gun or revolver, it was impossible to tell a policeman or Customs officer from a civilian. Any of them might have been officials of some sort, or, on the other hand, they might merely have been armed Natives. But if one tried to protect oneself there was always the danger of being arrested.

I could not get any mules in Dire Daoua for my transport, and found I should have to go to Harrar, about thirty miles up in the mountains, to buy what I wanted.

While we were in camp a few ponies were brought round for sale,

the Abyssinians having an original way of introducing them to one's notice. A Native would come up with a pony, and, without any preliminary patter, would begin galloping up and down at a furious rate, going through different manoeuvres, such as pulling the pony up to a dead stop while going at full gallop. He then expected his prospective customer to come up and bid him a price for the animal.

As everybody seemed to ride—a man is considered a nobody in Abyssinia if he walks—I bought a pony from one of these men for forty dollars. The coinage of Abyssinia, the Maria Theresa (Austrian) dollar, varies in value according to the fluctuations of the market, and at this time was worth about 2s., so that the pony cost me about £4. I had brought saddles and bridles with me.

In the Native bazaar I learned that I should have to go to Harrar for the mules I needed, unless I waited until I got to Addis Ababa, where horses and mules were very much cheaper. Such postponement was possible by engaging what is called a *ngadai*, who would take us there by camels or mules at a charge of so much per load. I had heard much talk about these *ngadis*, who were evidently a lazy lot, accustomed to move only when they pleased; they became, in fact, the masters of any expedition they contracted to conduct, compelling their victims to await their pleasure and endure their leisure. So, as I had come to Abyssinia to buy mules, I thought I might as well start in straight away, and, by having control of my own *safari*, avoid these people entirely. I therefore began to make arrangements to go to Harrar.

Meantime the wet season set in, and it began to pour with rain. The river near our camp was soon turned into a torrent. The water came down in a flood from the mountain, and it became difficult and even dangerous to cross it mounted. We welcomed the rain, however, for previously the country had been so parched that it appeared necessary to buy grain for the animals; with the rains the pasturage at once began to grow, providing plenty of grazing.

During our stay at Dire Daoua I was guilty of an oversight which might have cost me very dearly. I had a hundred pounds in gold in a box in my tent, and one day I forgot to lock it while I went for a ride round the town. Hurrying back to camp, I got something of a shock when I found that the box had been opened. A thief had been there, but he had been kind to me, for only £4 was missing. The Somali, Assan, blamed the Abyssinian soldier, who had been away from the camp most of the day, in the bazaar, whither I sent Assan to see if he was spending any money or had any about him. I got no direct evidence against him and could not say whether he had or had not taken the money. The two Somali stoutly protested their innocence, so I paid the Abyssinian off and sent him away.

Here the true qualities of Assan began to reveal themselves. He knew nothing about the country, or the language, or anything else. He was lazy, and would do nothing but sleep in his tent. When I

called upon him to do anything he simply smiled and stretched himself and said it was very nice in the tent. It took me all my time to restrain Selland from giving him the good thrashing he so justly deserved.

In addition to the pony referred to, I had now bought two mules and had engaged four Abyssinians at five dollars per month. These mules were packed with the articles necessary for the journey to Harrar. The Abyssinian Native will not carry anything, so I had to put whatever I wanted, including my box and personal belongings, on the mules.

Leaving Selland and Assan in charge of the camp, I started off for Harrar along a beautiful road, cut out of the rock, broad enough for a waggon. Branching off from the river, the road wound into the hills through beautiful scenery.

On the way I saw a number of Natives, who were called Gura-Gura. They looked something like Somali, and seemed to be very industrious agriculturists. I was surprised to see them using a kind of plough, drawn by oxen—the first time I had ever seen a plough used by Natives. Although it was a very primitive implement, it was a distinct advance on the usual African methods. The plough was drawn by two oxen, yoked, as in India, by a piece of wood across their necks, to which was attached a single rope fastened to the plough. The plough was made entirely of wood, except for a piece of iron at the point of the curved wooden blade. It did not dig up the soil and turn it over, but merely scratched it up.

At one place on the road a group of about half a dozen Abyssinians sat under a cloth, looking like so many bales of goods covered up with a sheet. This was my first glimpse of the way the Natives eat when any stranger is about. When they are likely to be overlooked they cover themselves in this manner lest they come under the influence of the "evil eye."

As we got higher up into the mountains there was a complete change in the atmosphere from that of Dire Daoua. The air was beautifully fresh and clear and healthy. The grazing also steadily improved. We came to a beautiful little lake, full of ducks, so tame that it was evident they were never shot. Being some distance in advance of my men, I sat down by the water to eat my lunch and wait for the main party to come up with the mules. As I waited a number of Native villagers surrounded me, and seemed very friendly, though I could not understand what they were saying. They were very different from the Natives in British East Africa, all being dressed in cloth, and they looked more intelligent than those I had been accustomed to. Here, too, I noticed evidence of civilization in the presence of telegraph wires, which I was afterwards told connected Harrar with Addis Ababa. On the road were several bridges crossing rivers, but they were allowed to be used only when the rivers were too full to ford, so as not to wear them out unnecessarily. At other times they

were closed with heaps of thorns. I also noticed several coffee plantations.

Harrar was a fair-sized town, built on the slope of the mountain, enclosed in a huge wall of stone, twenty or thirty feet high, with four entrance gates guarded by Abyssinian soldiers. In my diary I have described it as "the rottenest place it has even been by misfortune to enter." The language may not be very elegant, but it correctly describes my impression of that walled-in city in the mountains of Abyssinia. The gates were all closed at a certain hour at night, after which no one was allowed to enter or leave. The population must, I thought, have grown very considerably since the wall was built to enclose the town, and every available inch of ground within the walls had been built upon without regard for health, convenience, or situation.

The streets were simply alley-ways, about a yard wide; the overhanging balconies of some of the houses and hotels almost completely shut off the sunlight, and from some of these balconies it was possible to reach across to the house on the opposite side of the street. Did one happen to meet a donkey or mule with pack-saddles coming along the street, it was necessary to step aside into some doorway to allow it to pass. There was not the remotest attempt at sanitation, and the streets were running with filth and refuse of all kinds exuding a noisome stench. Some of the houses were one-storey and others two-storey buildings, but all had flat roofs, and one could only pity the poor wretches living in such quarters; at night they swarmed on to the roofs for fresh air.

Such a place might be a veritable city of plague, but fortunately it was often visited by torrential rains, which washed away the filth and did the cleaning which the inhabitants neglected to do for themselves.

I was struck by the number of drinking dens, kept by Greeks, to which the Natives flocked. There were also many stores, this being the only town for miles round. Very curious were these stores, suggestive of mediaeval England—little shops, some a few steps below the level of the street, where various trades were being carried on, such as sword-making, blacksmiths, silversmiths, and people selling different kinds of goods, all mixed up together.

It was between four and five o'clock in the afternoon when we arrived at Harrar, and having a letter of introduction from Mr. Bulpett to the British Consul, I at once sought him out. He took me to a hotel, kept by an Italian, which had a very small stable. In this I put my animals, but I had no sooner entered the place than I was accosted by some Abyssinians. Not understanding their language, I was at a loss to make out what they wanted until the Italian, who could speak a little English, came to my aid. I had brought two rifles with me, which these Abyssinians were demanding. I accompanied them to the Customs, and was there informed that everyone coming

into Harrar had to be disarmed. I was obliged to give up the rifles, but was told that they would be returned to me on leaving the town.

Returning to the hotel, I found two or three white men drinking with an Abyssinian, who was being served in the same way as the others. The absence of any racial distinction was novel to me, though I was wise enough to suppress my surprise. My Italian host asked if I would like to make the acquaintance of the Abyssinian, whom I found to be the Chief of Customs. The barefooted official appeared perfectly at ease, and bowed very politely in answer to my salutation. He could speak a little English, and gave me much useful information about the country.

After dinner I thought I would stroll round the town, but I had no sooner got outside than I heard shouting and there was a commotion in the street. Proceeding to the spot, I found one of my Abyssinians in the grasp of two Natives, who were dragging him away. He shouted to me to help him, but I was at a loss what to do. Going up to the two Natives who had hold of my man, I tried to make out what was the matter, but their remarks were unintelligible to me. I had again to seek the aid of the Italian hotel-keeper, who interpreted. They claimed that my Abyssinian had once been a slave who had deserted, and having just been recognised, they were re-taking him. I was helpless to interfere, and he was dragged away, pleading piteously, and I never saw him again.

The following day I began to buy mules, for which I had to pay a big price, being cheated both by my own man and by the sellers. My letter of introduction to the British Consul came in very useful now, and this gentleman did everything in his power for me. He warned me that I had to be very careful when buying mules to get proper witnesses, and to take them to the Custom House and have the sale registered. Otherwise, I might find someone turning up and claiming the mules, saying they had been stolen, or something of that kind. The Consul recommended a broker or agent, to whom I had to give a dollar for every mule he bought for me. The business proved long and trying, the bargaining for a single animal sometimes taking half a day—after which there was the registering of the sale at the Customs in the presence of two witnesses, till in the end I received a paper certifying that I had bought the mule.

I also invested in further pack and riding saddles. The pack saddle is a very simple arrangement made of Abyssinian leather, padded with hay, held in position by the fork of a tree sewn on to the fore part of it, on which we improved by a little padding. A long leather strap is used for lashing the packs on to the mule. The Abyssinians are the most adept people at mule packing that I have seen in any part of the world. They have very little regard for their animals, however, and do not mind giving them a sore back. The riding saddle was also very primitive, being roughly constructed of wood, with an upright piece at the front, and a cushion fixed on for the seat. There was just a ring for the stirrup iron, with a hole to put the big toe

through. I bought two or three of these saddles in case any of the men fell sick. It was also necessary to provide one for the cook. I found it to be the custom of the country for the cook to ride on a mule, on which he carried his pots and pans in a leather bag.

Some of the Abyssinians had handsomely decorated saddles and elaborate trappings for their animals, with fancy embroidered cloth. The horses' bits were similar to those used in Mexico, known as the "spade bit," a ring going under the lower jaw, with which it is possible to break the jaw if used with sufficient force; a cruel arrangement, in my opinion.

Having bought thirteen mules in Harrar, and engaged one or two more men, I returned to Dire Daoua, very glad to shake the dust of the foul city off my feet. We had to keep a careful watch on the mules, for they had a habit of running back to their late owners, in which case it was difficult to get them again.

Whilst camping at Dire Daoua I found time to visit the Chief or Ras of the district, Ras Makonen, and his son, who was then a boy of fifteen, now known as Haile Selassie, Emperor of Abyssinia.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE ROAD TO ADDIS ABABA.

The next business on arrival in Dire Daoua was to engage more men. This I found could not be done in an off-hand way; the men had to be taken before a magistrate. I had no trouble in recruiting men, but when I got them before the magistrate they demanded more money, and wanted blankets and saddles and all sorts of things. After talking and arguing all day, I signed them on by agreeing to pay a little more and giving them a few presents.

The magistrate's office was the most curious law court I have even seen, being simply a lean-to kind of shed, with all the front part open. Sitting cross-legged at the far side was the magistrate, in front of whom was a table made of an empty packing-case turned upside down and raised off the ground on legs made out of the lid of the box. At the same table, to his right, was his clerk. The wall behind was decorated with rifles, revolves, and a bugle or two, and the court was full of Abyssinians all talking together. It reminded me of a scene in a sketch called "Black Justice" which I once saw performed by some nigger minstrels at home. It served its purpose, though it looked ludicrous to anyone accustomed to the dignity and orderliness of a British Court of Justice.

Having signed on my men, I obtained a road pass, and began preparations in earnest for the advance. In the meantime Selland had been making some much needed improvements to the pack saddles. My outfit now comprised Selland, two Somali, and fifteen Abyssinians, with fifteen mules and one pony.

We had a lot of trouble at the start. All the animals were fairly wild, and no sooner had we got a load on a mule's back than it kicked until it had unseated the burden. Now and then one of the animals would make a bolt. This happened time after time, and one mule managed to throw off its load and clear out, and I never saw it again. At last we got away and pitched tents about ten miles out. I sent two men back to look for the runaway mule, but they returned without seeing it.

After travelling about thirty miles to the river Errer, we rested and bought fowls and milk from the Natives, who had little patches of cultivation in the river bed. Resuming the march, we travelled in a westerly direction and then halted at the village of Errer. We had no sooner made a start again than we came to a place where the path divided, and of course took the wrong turning, which led into a garden.

Seeing the path went right through and was much worn by use, and that there was nothing in the garden to spoil, as all the crops had been gathered, we did not hesitate to go on. I was ahead of the caravan and had only gone a short distance along the path when I heard shouting. We were skirting some hills, and looking towards them I saw a number of Natives waving and gesticulating. So far as I could make out, they seemed to be shouting " Bar Menelik," and thinking they were asking if I were going to Menelik, I replied in the same words. This had the effect of making them still more excited, and all at once the local inhabitants turned out of their huts and came rushing down towards us. It was a crowd of about thirty people, every man armed with gun and spear, which they waved in the air with much shouting. Holding up my hand, I called to them to keep quiet, but they were all yelling so loudly that nobody could hear me. As the excitement and shouting and waving of guns continued, I fully expected every minute to see a fight. About a dozen Natives were round me, and I noted that some had their guns at full cock. Seeing that they were all so wild that nothing would calm them, and not knowing what to do, I got off my mule and lit a cigarette, at the same time keeping my revolver ready in case it was required.

This was the one instance in which Assan proved of real service and really saved the situation. By this time several old men had turned up on the scene, and I was surprised to see my Somali begin pulling their beards, or rather I should say stroking their beards, as the performance was done very gently. Its effect was electrical, the Natives at once calming down a little; and then I found that all the trouble was caused by our passage through the garden. After this scene there was a palaver, and they told me a trespass had been committed. I explained that being a stranger in the country I had no idea that any wrong was being done, and that I had mistaken the garden track for the road. This did not appear to satisfy them, and they said they wanted compensation. As there was nothing in the garden, and so no damage could have been done, I concluded this

demand was simply a ruse to extort money. I pointed out that we had not destroyed anything, but in view of their continued insistence I pulled out my note-book and said I was willing to pay what they asked; but first I would have all their names, for I was going up to Addis Ababa, and when I got there I should see the Emperor Menelik and inquire from him whether they had a right to this money. That seemed to frighten them. Their demands for money at once ceased, and we were allowed to proceed without further interference.

The meaning of the words "Bar Menelik" was afterwards explained to me as the equivalent of our "Halt, who goes there?" or "In the name of Menelik." At the first call one is expected to stop; after they have called three times and the person spoken to does not stop, they are entitled to shoot—though I doubt very much if they would have resorted to this extreme measure in the case of a European. Knowing them to be of the same religion as himself, Assan had managed to quiet them. They were Muhammadans, and the act of stroking the beard is an indication of peace and a kind of freemasons' sign among them.

The Danakil Natives, amongst whom we camped next day, are a pastoral people, something like the Somali in appearance, but resembling the Masai even more in their habits and mode of living. The men are tall, fine-built fellows. I did not see any signs of cultivation, and so far as I could make out they trekked about, settling for a time in different parts of the country, after the Masai fashion, herding their cattle, sheep and goats. They also owned a few camels. Living a kind of gypsy life, they did not put up any substantial buildings but only small huts which they surrounded with a thorn fence, making a well-protected *boma*. Their dress consisted of a piece of cloth wrapped loosely about them. They were very truculent and treacherous people; whom even Menelik could not keep in order. We had to be very careful in going through their country, as they would think nothing of killing any straggler from the caravan.

On his expedition through this country Mr. McMillan had a Frenchman belonging to his party killed by one of these people. From what I could gather of the circumstances, the Frenchman had gone astray from the caravan and missed his way. While wandering about he met a Danakil Native, who said he would guide him back to the camp. The Frenchman did not trust him, and believing him to be leading him the wrong way refused his help and took his own course, which led into the desert. The Native remonstrated at this, and as the Frenchman refused to be convinced he drove his spear through the latter's body. It was thought that the Frenchman had strayed a good way into the bush and the Native could not resist the temptation to kill him, prompted partly by disgust for the Frenchman's stupidity, and partly by the honour that he would gain among the other Natives for killing a white man. That was the story told to Mr. McMillan.

Our camp was by the side of a well made by the Natives, from which we had to bale out the water required for our use. The Danakil

who had guided us to the well slept in our camp that night. There were no other Natives in the immediate vicinity, and there existed no clear path, so it was arranged that he should start with us the next day to take us on to the nearest village, which was not very far off. Two hours later we came to a group of Danakil villages where there was water. My idea was to give the animals and men a rest here, and start again in the afternoon.

As soon as we arrived I gave the Danakil guide a present of cloth for his trouble in showing us the way. He refused to take the cloth and threw it down on the ground, demanding six dollars as payment of his services. This was extortionate, for six dollars was a month's pay for an Abyssinian, and I made him understand that it was absolutely out of the question. While I was arguing the point with the guide, my Abyssinians seized the opportunity to make a demand for an increase in their rice ration. On my refusal to accede either to the demand of the guide or the Abyssinians, the latter took their kits and started off, while the Danakil seized one of the mules and tried to make off with it. I shouted to him to stop and covered him with my gun, but he got behind the mule, so the threat had no effect. By this time more Danakils had arrived on the scene, and the situation began to look serious. My two Somali had gone after the Abyssinians to try and induce them to come back, and only Selland and myself were left.

I did not know what the Danakils might do next, as the other mules were left about the camp, so I collected all the guns and put them with ammunition, against a tree. I had two boxes of ammunition, and my first act was to load all the guns. Of course I could not talk to these Danakils, but they saw what I was doing and probably deemed it unwise to try to take any more mules. In the meantime Selland had set off on the pony to ride down the man who had stolen the mule. I told him not to be away long, for the Danakils appeared to be hesitating what course to pursue. However, the Natives continued to collect in the camp, or to prowl around outside, and just as I was expecting matters to come to a crisis, either by the Danakils making a rush at me or trying to take the mules, Selland turned up with the missing animal.

The most amusing side to all this pother was that the Danakils and Abyssinians were bitter enemies; in fact, the true Abyssinians were afraid to go through that country except with a fairly big armed force. In the heat of the moment, I suppose my Abyssinians had forgotten they were in enemy country, and soon after Selland returned with the mule they came rushing back to camp for protection from the Danakils, who had attacked them. After that they were only too glad to get their rifles and start work. Luckily a very awkward situation ended without a shot being fired, although we had been on the point of having a free fight. I think the two Somali had some intention of deserting too, but thought better of it.

We came at last to the road leading to Addis Ababa. Its wired telephone poles must have been a continuation of the line I had seen

at Harrar. At noon we halted near a river, with waterholes in its otherwise dry bed, and started off again at 5 p.m., crossing the Hawash river just before it got dark. The river is in a deep gorge, with high rocky banks, and is crossed by an iron bridge constructed by French engineers. It was the only river we met on the way to Addis Ababa that possessed such a bridge. After going through a very rocky country we rested at the Tadechamalka river; and on going down to the stream to bathe I was surprised to see a white man by the side of the water engaged in the homely, domestic office of washing his shirt. We exchanged greetings and I found him to be a German named Ulm, who was going up to Addis Ababa with some transport waggons. We had an interesting chat, for Ulm was a man who, like myself, had travelled pretty well all over the world. He had been through the Russo-Japanese War, but his latest experience was pearl fishing in the South Seas. He invited me up to his camp, which was not far from my own, and there he introduced me to another German, who was really the head of the outfit. They had four waggons drawn by bullocks, but had taken a different road from mine, for it was impossible to travel with waggons the way I had brought my men. They told me they had been on the road about six weeks.

It was a curious coincidence that some years later, while on my trip to the Congo, I camped near a stream in heavily bushed, remote elephant country, and as usual when the opportunity presented itself, went down to the river to see if it were possible to bathe. There on the edge of the water I was astonished to find a white man entirely absorbed in industriously washing a shirt. When I spoke to him he looked up with a start, and to my amazement proved to be the very same German, Ulm, whom I had encountered, similarly employed, while on my way to Addis Ababa.

The Germans having made up their minds not to move till next day, I determined to spend the day at this spot, finding plenty for the men to do in repairing pack saddles and getting the caravan in good order. My new friends had lunch with Selland and myself, and we went across to their camp for dinner, finding much pleasure in chatting with white men again. During our absence my followers had taken the opportunity of buying some *tej*, a Native beer made from honey, brewed in a somewhat similar manner to *njoe*, the favourite drink of the Kikuyu. The Abyssinian *tej* seemed to me to have a pleasanter taste, for they put in it the leaf of some tree that grows in the country, which improves it. The men, after drinking the *tej*, were quarrelling amongst themselves, and Selland, who went first to see how they were getting on with their work, found it difficult to keep them quiet. One of the men drew a big knife and was about to stab Selland, when the latter hit him in the stomach with the butt of his rifle, sending him sprawling and knocking all the wind out of him. Seeing that we were not to be played with, the men cooled down, and we had no further trouble.

The Abyssinians, it must be said, considered themselves better

than the average white man; that is, since they had beaten the Italians. They had a little more regard for an Englishman than anyone else, and would grudgingly admit that he was as good as an Abyssinian.

The next day's march took us over the mountain by which we had spent the night, and we entered a plain beyond. Curiously enough, the Abyssinians have a Custom house right up in the mountains, built on the top of the highest peak, from which they can look down into the plain and note the approach of any travellers. I went up to this Custom house to pay the official visit and show him my pass. He was very courteous, and I made him a present of some cartridges I had with me.

We camped on the plain, still in company with the Germans, and then moved on again through very rocky country with steep ravines, which made travelling extremely difficult. In some parts there was good black cotton soil, and wherever this was found every inch of the land was under cultivation and thickly inhabited.

It had become very much colder at this altitude—about 6,000 feet above sea-level. The next morning we experienced difficulty in getting the Abyssinians to start, and this I at first attributed to the effect of the elevation. It turned out, however, that it was one of their festival days, so they were all given a present.

The Abyssinians grow much wheat and barley in this district and make some very good bread. A present of Native bread was brought into camp that day, and afterwards I bought some. It is not made in the same way as in England, but is more like the Indian *chupatti*—a pancake, or unleavened bread. There are two kinds, one dark and one much lighter. The flour is ground between stones rubbed together by Native women, as is usual practically right through Africa.

Our route now lay through the same cultivated highland country, and we found the early morning start an increasingly chilly business, but by mid-day the weather usually became very hot. Fortunately we had no difficulty in selecting our camp sites by the side of some running water. Practically all the landscape about us was under cultivation. Soon we were about 8,000 feet above sea level.

CHAPTER III.

ADDIS ABABA AND THE ABYSSINIANS.

We were now approaching Addis Ababa, and on May 7, we began the last march to the capital. Going on ahead of the caravan, I arrived at the British Consulate and introduced myself to Mr. Clark, the official who had sent the telegram to Nairobi informing me that the Emperor Menelik had given permission for my expedition in Abyssinia. The British Minister gave me a very hearty welcome and asked me to

make my headquarters in the Legation compound, a favour which I very readily accepted.

The Legation was situated on a hill, some distance from the main portion of the town, which is built on the opposite hill and can be reached only by crossing a valley where many of the poorer Natives live in kraals. These were just as rude and primitive as those seen in the wilds, although we were in the capital of Abyssinia, where the Emperor Menelik had his palace, and the principal nations of the world, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Russia, were represented by their Legations and Ministers. The British compound comprised about eight acres of fenced land, the Legation buildings consisting of a cluster of round huts built in the Abyssinian style, connected one with the other, so that inside it appeared as if they were all one building. They covered about two acres of ground, enclosed by a mud wall three or four feet high.

I chose a suitable site for my camp in the larger enclosure outside the mud wall, where there was a fair amount of grazing. From my tent I had a full view of Addis Ababa across the valley, and the town seemed to be half Kaffir kraals and half European houses. Running through the valley was a river, then nearly dried up, but I was informed that in the rainy season it was converted into a rushing torrent, the water coming down from the mountains in such volume that it swept all before it, and sometimes so suddenly that people living in the valley were caught unawares and many of them drowned in the flood.

It may not be generally known that Addis Ababa was the first attempt to form a permanent capital in Abyssinia. Previously the Emperor was continually moving, but as he and his subjects at that time lived in tents, this was not a very difficult matter, and the custom had certain advantages. With no proper sanitary arrangements it can easily be imagined that the heads of the Abyssinian State found it desirable not to prolong unduly their stay in any one place.

The selection of Addis Ababa for a permanent capital was due possibly in large measure to the introduction of Western ideas into the country and to the presence at the Court of Menelik of the representatives of foreign Powers, who began to build houses and to exercise a modifying influence on the life of the high officials of the country. At the time of my arrival preparations were being made for laying down water mains, and attempts were made to lay out streets after the manner of civilized countries. The Emperor seemed to have selected the highest elevation for his palace, and the governors of provinces and lesser dignitaries came next in something like rotation, each occupying smaller palaces, while the ordinary Natives lived in huts clustered together in villages.

In the town it was strange to see a beautiful double-storied European house, built by some Native prince, close beside a village such as may be seen anywhere out in the wilds. Addis Ababa pos-

sessed a racecourse and a bank, known as the Bank of Abyssinia, which was run by an English company.

At the Legation I met a British officer who had been sent out to buy mules for Somaliland, and had arrived a few days ahead of me. Besides Mr. Clark, the British Minister, I also made the acquaintance of Mr. Johnson, the British Consul, who gave me a very cordial welcome, and also Mr. Hohler, who had just arrived from Cairo to relieve Mr. Clark, about to go home on leave.

Another interesting personage met at the Legation was an Irishman named McKelvie, who had been living in Abyssinia about fifty years and had little in his appearance to suggest a son of the Emerald Isle. Only at times, when conversing in English, did he lapse into his native brogue, and then there was no mistaking his accent. During my stay in Addis Ababa, I spent many pleasant hours with McKelvie, who easily passed among the Natives as a full-blooded Abyssinian, for in manners, dress and every particular he was an exact counterpart of any Native one might meet in the streets of the town. He had married an Abyssinian wife, and his children were no different from any other Native children. I gathered that he had run away from his ship on his first voyage to sea, when about sixteen years of age. At that time King Theodore occupied the throne of Abyssinia. McKelvie was one of the white men upon whom that monarch vented his rage, and he was imprisoned at Magdala, being afterwards released by General Napier. Instead of being anxious to get out of the country, he remained, and seemed likely to end his days there. McKelvie was a useful man about the Legation as interpreter and general factotum, and from him I was able to gather a deal of valuable information. Old McKelvie told me that the capture of Magdala was a very easy victory for General Napier for when the British troops arrived in the outskirts of Magdala they encountered a heavy rainstorm. The Abyssians, having nothing but old Flintlock rifles, would not fire on account of the rain. The Abyssians got a great shock and surprise when they found that the British troops could shoot in the rain, so surrendered and the Emperor Theodore committed suicide.

Having got my camp into order, I paid off the Abyssinians who had accompanied me on the journey from Dire Daoua, and also dispensed with the two Somali, who had given me a lot of trouble. One of the Abyssinians whom I had made headman, tried to make trouble for me by lodging at the Legation a number of complaints about the rows we had had on the way up. It was really a case of blackmail. One of his complaints was that the men did not get enough to eat, and another that we had struck them, which was a serious thing in Abyssinia. I could see that if I offered him five or six dollars he would be satisfied, and the authorities would never hear his complaints. I was, however, determined not to be imposed on, and told him to make his complaints against Selland and myself. He told his story at the Legation, and they at once saw through him. Curiously enough, this man, Burra Diddi by name, was afterwards very eager to come

back to me, and as he was a big, strong fellow, and had been very useful as headman, I re-engaged him. After the other Abyssinians had been away a few days, they also came back and I re-engaged them.

Amongst others I engaged was an Arab named Hamud, who had been paid off from the *safari* of a German who arrived in Addis Ababa a few days after me. I told him to bring in more Arabs, as it will be remembered I made it a practice when travelling to pick men from different nationalities or tribes, and I did not wish to be dependent solely upon Abyssinians on my return journey across country to Nairobi.

I also chanced to meet a Swahili anxious to get home to Nairobi. He had been one of a party of traders taken prisoners by some Abyssinians who raided our northern frontier and murdered and robbed the Arab and Swahili trading caravans going up towards Lake Rudolph. This man, whose name was Juma (which means Friday), escaped with his life, but was made a prisoner. As he had been three years in Abyssinia, and spoke the language, in addition to Swahili, I realized that he would be very useful as interpreter, and I was only too pleased to get hold of him.

Being anxious to get away before the rainy season started, I at once set about purchasing mules and horses, the object of my expedition. If I did not get away before the rainy season I should be ruined, for it would then be impossible to move. When the rains came in Abyssinia all work was suspended and everything was at a standstill. The people knew what to expect and made provision for it. For two or three months they had to stay indoors and no animal could be left out.

I found that a horse and mule market was held every Saturday, and that this was the only place where animals could be bought. Sometimes mules were brought round to my camp, but most of my animals were bought at this weekly market, where two or three hundred animals were offered for sale. The method of selling them was very similar to that at Dire Daoua, the owner of the horse or mule, as the case might be, galloping it madly up and down the market, occasionally pulling up suddenly to a dead stop. The actual buying of the mules I left more to my men and a broker I engaged in the town; for if it had been known that they were for a white man I should have had to pay extravagantly, the Natives being always ready to practise any imposition of that kind. In this way I bought from ten to fifteen animals every Saturday.

As I have mentioned, animals were sometimes brought into the camp. I had on several occasions noticed two or three fellows riding round the camp on some scraggy horses. When they had been round two or three times I asked them what they wanted for their horses, and was genuinely astonished to learn that they were beggars. If they were so hard up that they had to beg, why didn't they sell their

horses, I asked. The reply was remarkable. They could not do that because without horses they could not get about quickly enough to do their business and visit all their patrons ! I had heard of " beggars on horseback " ; now I met such gentry.

Beggars are seen by the hundred in Addis Ababa, many of them wrecks of humanity, some with arms or legs missing, and others suffering from all kinds of diseases. They sit about at every street corner, and I noticed that the Natives seemed rather generously disposed towards them. The people going to the market held every day in Addis Ababa rarely passed these beggars without dropping something at their feet; it might be a few sticks of firewood, something to eat, or whatever they were taking to the market. Some beggars, I noticed, had had one of their hands cut off, and I found on inquiry that they were branded criminals, that being the Abyssinian punishment for theft. Taking a short cut one day to the market I noticed a number of Abyssinians sitting around a fire under a tree. On the fire a pot of fat was boiling. Nearby, a Native was sitting stolidly eating some raw meat. His left arm was held by two other Natives while a third was calmly amputating his hand. I was fascinated: I was rooted to the spot : I could not move until the job was finished. There was no excitement, they were all chatting as if nothing untoward was happening. I must admit that he was making a good job of the operation; just like a butcher would cut off a pig's trotter. As soon as the operation was over the stump was dipped in the pot of boiling fat to stop the bleeding.

Abyssinian justice was rough and ready. A person found guilty of murder was handed over to the next of kin of the murdered person, who could do what he liked with him, but usually exacted vengeance by taking his life with the sword. In case of doubt as to who has committed a certain crime, they had an original method of finding out. This seemed to be based largely on superstition, and it required a good deal of faith to believe that it was always the guilty person who suffered for the crime. A boy was put to sleep by the priests, either by hypnotism or some other means, and he was supposed to find out in his trance, or dream, who the guilty person was.

The most interesting sight in the capital was the market, held daily except Sunday (which was observed as religiously as at home) in a huge square, where every variety of merchandise to be found in the country was offered for sale. The busiest day of the week was Saturday, when it was almost impossible to move amongst the dense throng of people buying and selling. From an early hour in the morning the streets were crowded with Natives from the country bringing in their wares—skins of honey, firewood, salt, barley, wheat and a variety of other things. All the produce was packed on mules or donkeys, and it was really wonderful how much was crowded on to the back of one of these animals. One often saw what appeared to be a moderately sized hay-stack walking down the street, the donkey carrying it being buried out of sight beneath the load.

The streets were full of a motley crowd of people, most of whom carried a small umbrella like a Chinese parasol, except that it could not be closed. It did not seem to be used as a protection, for it was carried in all weathers. The effect was ludicrous in the extreme. All the Natives dress very much alike. The men wore tight white trousers and a *shamma* — a long white sheet with a broad red stripe in the centre—which was wrapped loosely about the upper part of the body. They were all barefoot. The women wore a long piece of white cloth wound round them like a skirt.

Dominating the market were two comical looking structures placed side by side. They were merely circular enclosures of sticks, with overhanging thatched roofs, very ragged and rickety-looking contraptions, not unlike two huge birds' nests. These were the offices of the official whose duty it was to collect tolls, register sales and settle disputes in the market.

The Natives were very suspicious about all money, so much so that they would count the dots round the edge of the Maria Theresa dollar, the coin of the country, and if one was missing or worn away, would refuse it. The Emperor Menelik issued dollar, half-dollar, and quarter-dollar pieces bearing his own head, but his subjects fought shy of them, and outside Addis Ababa no Native would have anything to do with them. Even in the capital they did not like them, and very often refused to accept them as legal tender. For smaller change than the Maria Theresa dollar the Abyssinians used cartridges, the most popular being the French pattern, the **fusil gras,** the French gun of that name being the most popular in Abyssinia. Ten cartridges went to the dollar. These cartridges were in general use at the time of my visit, and it was distinctly amusing—if not startling—to see a Native housewife going to market with a bandolier of cartridges slung round her waist in order to pay " cash " for her shopping.

There was constant and heavy traffic in Addis Ababa; and people were coming in continually from the different districts to see the Emperor Menelik. Every person of any consequence rode a mule, and the more followers a man had the more he was respected and regarded as a person of distinction. It was quite a usual thing to see a man riding through the town with fifty armed men, all mounted, in his train. Following this custom, I took all my men with me when I went into the town, and having about thirty Abyssinian servants, mounted on mules, I suppose I was considered a person of some importance.

I saw the Emperor one day as he was on the way to open a church at Entotto, right up in the hills behind Addis Ababa. He was riding a mule in a procession and was dressed like an ordinary Abyssinian, except that he was wearing top boots. He had a black cloth *shamma* with a red hood, and what looked like a handkerchief tied round his head beneath a broad wide-awake hat, a headgear which is very fashionable in the country. He was accompanied by princes and governors of provinces, with a large number of Natives following in a

body, no recognized order being kept.

Menelik was an absolute monarch; whatever he said was law, and the people were little better than serfs. The Emperor exacted tribute from the governors of the various provinces, who in turn exacted it from the people. The old feudal system was still in vogue and every person of importance kept a small army of retainers, who lived with him as members of his family. There was no standing army, but the chiefs when called upon furnished so many men to fight for the king.

As regards religion, the Abyssinians are Copts, but their ceremonial embraces a number of Jewish rites. It is one of the oldest sects of Christianity, and the people appeared to be very devout according to their belief. There were a few Muhammadans among them, but the vast majority were Christians. The latter generally wore round their necks a blue ribbon with a cross attached to it. The many Native churches in Addis Ababa were circular buildings, with a grass roof, like a huge hut, and nearly all had round them a verandah seven or eight feet wide. The Chief Priest, or *Abuna*, is appointed from Alexandria. He was well paid, but was never allowed to leave the country. Abyssinia's patron saint is the same as our own, Saint George.

There were very few British in Abyssinia. At the time of my visit there were only a handful of independent English people, apart from the officials at the Legation. I had a letter of introduction to a Captain England, and while I was looking for him I came across two other white men, one of whom was the American Consul, Mr. Vearley. Captain England I found to be the head of a big company interested in a railway to be built in Abyssinia.

It was surprising to discover what influence the British exercised. The Abyssinian seemed at that time to have more respect for Britain than for any other nation. Since the war with Italy, the Italians had fallen very low in their estimation, yet there were hundreds of this nationality in the country—nearly all masons by trade. All the European houses were built by these Italians, and it seemed very strange to me, coming from British East Africa, to see an African ordering about a white man engaged on building his house.

I spent a month in Addis Ababa. My mornings were usually employed in examining mules and engaging men to accompany me on the return journey across the desert. After the heat of the day I generally had a ride round the town, and the evening would be spent with some of my friends at the American or British Legations.

After buying a number of animals, I found that there was not sufficient grazing for them, and for the first time in my experience in Africa I had to pay for fodder. Barley could be obtained quite cheaply —about two dollars for a gunny-bag. An expensive item was firewood. The Abyssinians collect the dung of cows and mules, make it into cakes, and sell it for fuel.

Practically all the Abyssinians I met were armed with rifles, which were being imported into the country by the thousand. Nor were they obsolete weapons. On every hand one saw plenty of modern firearms, including the .303 and the Mauser magazine rifle. This fact was significant, and in my opinion it will end in trouble. The Abyssinians are the best armed Native race in Africa, and could if required put a hundred thousand men in the field, equipped and mounted. They could not easily be brought under subjection by any foreign Power. Though indifferent shots, they know their country thoroughly, their methods of warfare suit it, and it would prove a most formidable territory to-day to any invading army.

As the heavy rains were expected about June 15, everyone told me that if I failed to get away before then my expedition would be held up for a long period; so I hurried on my preparations for my long trek across country.

Just about the time that all my plans were completed, I received an official letter from London offering me the post of Inspector of the Abyssinian frontier. Had it come earlier, I should have been strongly tempted to accept it, although the guarding of six hundred miles of frontier with a handful of thirty soldiers—the extent of the command offered me—was not altogether an alluring prospect even to my adventurous mind. How anyone could be expected with thirty men to keep the Abyssinians from raiding that enormous length of frontier was not explained to me. The pay was fairly tempting, however, and but for the fact that my expedition was ready to start and my future plans already in train, I would probably have made the attempt. In the circumstances I declined.

Seeing that this offer could not be accepted, the Government commissioned me to take charge of thirty Abyssinian soldiers, in the British Government's employ, who were going on to our northern frontier. The Government had also a quantity of ivory on the frontier, and I signed a contract to transport this ivory to British East Africa, for which purpose it was made known to me that facilities would be given for me to obtain camels on the boundary.

Before leaving Addis Ababa I had to get a further passport from the Emperor Menelik.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MARCH TO THE FRONTIER.

None of the Abysssinians and Arabs who were to accompany me had ever been in British East Africa before, and I had some trouble about arranging their pay. They had an excellent system in Abyssinia; every man engaged had to bring two bondsmen as security for his good behaviour. In the event of desertion or stealing *en route* the two sureties would be liable to arrest and punishment equal to that which would have been meted out to the deserter or thief had he been caught. Such a system provided a most satisfactory guarantee of good conduct.

Tents, cooking-pots and blankets were provided for all the men signed on. Each received so much money in advance with which to buy his own food. This saved me much worry, as on all my previous *safaris* I had had to provide food, which was frequently a very difficult task.

By June 3 all was in readiness for a start on the six hundred mile journey to the frontier. My caravan consisted, in addition to myself, of one white man (Mr. Selland), thirty-one Abyssinians, ten Arabs, one Swahili, fifty-one mules, and forty-nine horses. Before leaving the British Legation at Addis Ababa I obtained a small Union Jack, and this floated gaily in the breeze at the head of the caravan. I mention this specially, because the flag was destined to cause me considerable trouble before the frontier was reached. A few days previously Mr. Hohler had noticed one of my men flying an Abyssinian flag in camp, and had drawn my attention to it, asking why I was flying the Abyssinian flag in the British Legation. I knew nothing of the matter until he mentioned it, when I at once had it taken down, and suggested casually that Mr. Hohler should give me a Union Jack, which he did. I was glad to have it, feeling that a combination of the Emperor's passport and the British Ensign must give importance to the expedition and save me from petty annoyances. When we were not on the march the flag flew at my tent. It accompanied me the whole of the journey, and I think I can claim the distinction of being the first man to carry the British flag from one capital to the other—from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. I was certainly the first trader who ever undertook the journey.

The first day's march was to a running river called the Akaki. So far I had not heard anything of the Abyssinians who were to accompany me with supplies to Golbo on the frontier, Mr. Hohler having said they would overtake me about here. A temporary agent was in charge of the Abyssinian frontier, and had I accepted the appointment of Inspector, I should have relieved him. At his camp, about five weeks' march from the capital, I was to pick up the Government ivory, for transport to Nairobi.

A specially strict guard was kept that first night, as some

of the animals might try to break out and return to Addis Ababa. Mine was a dangerous position. If any of the animals had strayed, and compelled the expedition to stop to recover them, we should have been caught in the rains, which might well have entailed a delay of some months. Fodder would have had to be bought for the animals; and my money being pretty well all spent by this time, it would have meant absolute ruin.

Next morning I discovered that the Swahili, Juma, had disappeared. This was an irreparable loss, for Juma, as interpreter, was the most important man in the expedition. Thinking he might have gone back to Addis Ababa—I returned to the capital directly the caravan had started on its way. The British Consul told me that the Abyssinian soldiers who were supposed to be coming with me had left the day before, but I could learn nothing of the Swahili. On rejoining the caravan, we passed through a rather thorny, bushy country, travelling in a southerly direction, and crossing Akaki and Awasli rivers. Just before pitching tents the Swahili came in, and explained his absence by stating that he had been held prisoner by some Abyssinians, who took him for one of the king's slaves. His reappearance was a great relief to me.

Difficulties on *safari* grow faster than mushrooms, and that night the camp was disturbed by much quarrelling amongst my men, who had got hold of some *tej*. Some said they would go no further, others were for going back, some wanted one thing and some another, until it was literally impossible to tell what they did want. Being anxious to avoid troubles at this early stage of the journey, for I did not relish the idea of going back to Addis Ababa to settle disputes, I exercised myself to the utmost to restore peace, and after interminable talking, and putting one or two of the more quarrelsome under arrest, I managed to square matters, and the storm gradually blew over.

The Abyssinians who were going with me now arrived with nine more mules and fifteen guns. Camping with them was an Abyssinian soldier escorting three prisoners, runaway slaves he was taking back to Addis Ababa. With the addition of these Abyssinians my caravan assumed formidable proportions. I had fully thirty men armed with guns and over a hundred animals. Travelling in single file, the long line of men and beasts wound away in the distance like a huge snake, the rear of the procession trailing away almost out of sight.

This part of the country was inhabited by the Waragu tribe, who kept cattle and cultivated the land with a kind of rude plough, drawn by two oxen, something like the one we had seen at Harrar. The country seemed very fertile, mostly of black cotton soil. The Natives were growing what looked like a wild banana, the root of which they consider very appetising.

At Allotta, a place we passed on the way, I had engaged an Abyssinian, and soon after getting into camp this man was caught

stealing money from one of the other men. It was also found that he had stolen a bandolier with thirty rounds of ammunition. My inclination was to take him along with the caravan and hand him over to the next chief we came across. But my headman advised me to kick him out of camp in case he escaped at night with one of the mules or horses. Everything that he had stolen was fortunately recovered, and my men having taken the law into their own hands and given him a good hiding, I decided to let him go, first getting him to swear " by the death of Menelik " that he would not give any further trouble. Swearing " by the death of Menelik " *Menelik amut* — was then the fashionable oath in Abyssinia. The light-fingered gentleman, having been sworn, was told to clear out without further ceremony, and that was the last I ever saw of him. The other men I engaged at Addis Ababa had so far given no cause for complaint. There had been no desertions, and none of my own men had attempted to steal anything, so that evidently there was virtue in the Abyssinian method of signing on.

We continued our march in a south-easterly direction, and while travelling through a valley we were pulled up by a guard stationed on the road, who refused to allow us to pass. I had noticed a house perched on the hill-side, and had an idea that it might be a Custom house. I told the man who had stopped me to send for the *shawn* (chief), and after waiting some time I saw him descending the hill. When he came up to us I askel Juma to find out what he wanted. The Swahili interpreted his demands, which were that I should pay a duty of one franc each for all mules I had loaded. Just then another man turned up saying that he was the head *shawn* and he wanted a franc too. I told Juma to make it plain to them that I was bound for the British frontier with the Emperor's passport, and that I did not intend to pay duty or anything else. I shewed them the letter from the Emperor. On seeing it the man who had first claimed to be the *shawn* said I could proceed, but the other still insisted on having the money, so I told him I would send a man back to inform the Emperor. This appeared to frighten him and he conceded that I could go on if I liked.

A facsimile of the Emperor's letter is reproduced for the benefit of my readers. The Abyssinian style of handwriting, it will be seen, is not unlike the Chinese. There are, I believe, something like two hundred and fifty letters in their alphabet, which is supposed to have been introduced many hundred of years ago by priests who came from Armenia to spread the Christian religion.

At Marko, our next halt, we were soon the centre of a curious throng, the people following us about at every turn. Strange to say, these Natives were very fair of complexion, some of them nearly white. I remarked also that the women had not the frizzy hair which usually characterises the African female; it was more inclined to be long like that of a European, and they were very good-looking. In other respects, too, they were very exceptional, being remarkably

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Reproduction of Emperor Menelik's letter.

clean, and the butter, eggs and other food offered for sale in the market looked very fresh and tempting. The butter was almost as good as anyone could buy in England and was very cheap, so I bought all in the market, with some eggs and onions.

During the afternoon an Abyssinian approached me in a very mysterious way, saying he had some gold for sale. His manner suggested that he had hit upon a rich mine and was going to let me into the secret. My curiosity being aroused, I told him to bring the gold along. He came just before dark, and showed me a very small piece of gold fashioned like an ear-ring. When he mentioned the price, ten dollars, he must have made the same mistake about me that I had made about him. We were evidently both under the same delusion. I thought he had the gold mine, and evidently he thought I had it. Of course I declined the offer. When the matter was mentioned to Juma, he told me there was quite a big trade done in gold in different parts of the country, which I have since been given to understand is illegal.

From Marko I steered a south-westerly course through a most fertile and beautiful country, watered by a small running stream, the Sharra-Sharra, which, by the way, flows into Lake Hoggo. The land was splendidly cultivated and fairly well inhabited by the Waragu, who seemed well disposed towards Europeans. Whenever I passed them they made a deep salaam. They were very fair, especially the women, and had a distinctly Jewish cast of features.

Slight showers of rain now began to fall every day, which made the track over the black cotton soil rather slippery. We followed the mountain range, the path being high up on the mountain slope, from which we obtained a grand view. Thousands of feet below us miles of alluvial country were in sight, and away in the distance lay Lakes Hoggo and Lamina, their waters sparkling in the morning sun. Everyone seemed to be happy, and as we went along Juma became confidential and regaled me with scraps of his personal history. Only a few of his party had escaped being killed by the Abyssinians. After being in captivity for many months he succeeded in regaining his liberty, and found his way to the British Legation where he was befriended.

I was thoroughly enjoying the march. Having plenty of horses, I picked a fresh animal each day and rode in advance of the caravan. Close behind me came Juma, then the headman and the soldiers going to the frontier. The cook was mounted on a mule, with his cooking pots and pans in a bag. He was never far away, so that if I got ahead of the caravan and wanted to stop, he could make me a cup of tea. I had also a personal servant, and then came my syce who looked after my horses. The spare animals we were taking along—those not actually in use—were led by halters. Behind the animals came a small rearguard.

The Arabs were giving the most trouble. It turned out that

they were not used to this kind of thing. They had mostly been doing labouring work, and had never really been on a good expedition. They had no idea of caravan work and were continually lagging behind, requiring a lot of spurring up to keep them in line and prevent their straying.

The Abyssinians did their work well, but they had to be watched to see that they attended to the mules properly, for they were by nature very cruel in their treatment of animals. No notice was taken of sore backs; in fact, in Abyssinia practically every mule had a sore back. When the sore became very bad, the animal was thrown down and the place burnt. Good was certainly accomplished, and the mischief was prevented from spreading or breaking out into a boil that would perhaps take months to heal.

At Wobaruk the men bought an ox for about five or six dollars. The Abyssinians ate their meat raw, and feasted upon it more like ravenous wolves than human beings. The spectacle was disgusting. They just cut a little of the animal's throat, very lightly, and then they got out their knives and began to skin it before it was dead, cutting off large slices of the flesh whilst it was still quivering and then devouring it raw. This Abyssinian fashion obtained even at the Court of Menelik, and when the Emperor gave a banquet to his people—sometimes as many as ten thousand feasted together—a large number of oxen were killed and eaten whilst the flesh was still warm. From eating raw meat all Abyssinians suffer more or less from tapeworm. They have a remedy for it—the wild male fern—and during my stay in Abyssinia it was quite a common thing for a man to ask for a day off to take medicine to cure himself of tapeworm.

At Shashagone I had to be careful, as the people had a very bad reputation, and would have thought nothing of putting a spear through me if they could have done it without much risk to themselves. I therefore kept a good grazing guard, and put a strong watch over the camp at night. Besides having the treachery of the Natives to guard against, I had been warned that the road was infested with robbers armed with rifles, who might raid my *safari* at any time.

We now took a more southerly course across a very fine, moderately well-wooded plain, with good grazing, to the Wera river, which flows into Lake Regina Margherita. We followed it down to Alaba, where I laid in a stock of barley for the mules and horses. The Natives here differed from the Waragua, being more of the Galla type. They had a very curious substitute for money—an iron bar, bent at one end, served in lieu of coinage; ten of them, so far as I recollect, equalled one dollar. There was practically no game, the Abyssinians having killed off everything; but just before reaching camp Selland shot two small buck.

Alaba proved to be rather an interesting place, where the Natives had more respect for white men than at other places we had visited.

Indeed, they were most abject, falling down flat on their stomachs as I passed.

We now crossed a huge, waterless plain which had at one time been cultivated by the Arussi. Since they were driven into the hills by the Abyssinians it had remained a waste. I had been on the lookout for game all the way through Abyssinia, but had seen nothing but a few small dik-dik. However, just before reaching our camping ground I shot two fine reed-buck. It seemed a great pity to see this beautiful plain without a soul living on it. It had evidently been well cultivated at one time and would have made a fine country for settlers, with its thousands upon thousands of acres of splendid land only waiting for the plough.

Next morning we continued south, and came to a Custom-house, where we were told that by command of the chief we could not proceed farther. Having ordered the caravan to off-load, I went with the guide or headman and my interpreter to see the chief, who lived six miles away. Going through a beautifully fertile country we came to a cluster of Abyssinian villages, to one of which I was conducted. After waiting under a tree for about half an hour, some Abyssinians came out, to whom I showed my pass and asked why I was not allowed to proceed. They said it was the order of the big chief, who lived at Allata, a good day's ride from their village, and they had sent a mounted messenger to him to ask if I might be allowed to go on.

Seeing that there was nothing for me to do but wait, I sent a note back to Selland, telling him to pitch camp. The villagers told me that it would be at least a day or two before I could expect to receive the chief's authority to continue on my way. Being in possession of Menelik's passport, and having been told before setting out that it would take me right through the country, I was entirely at a loss to understand why the *safari* was stopped. It was, however by the orders of the big chief, or prince of that district, so I realized that we must perforce make the best of it and await his pleasure.

Whilst sitting under the tree, a chief asked if I would have some food with him. He was dressed rather differently from the other Natives, wearing a black cloak, such as Menelik wore, lined with red. He carried a shield covered with red cloth, which I found, when the cloth had been removed, was decorated with silver, denoting, so I was told, prowess in battle or some feat by which he had distinguished himself. Feeling rather hungry, I accepted his offer, and was conducted to his hut. It was much larger than any ordinary Native hut, the door being high enough to walk through without stooping. In the wall were two small windows, luxuries not usually seen in a Native hut. Inside the building a curtain separated the living room from the mule-stalls, while at the back a space was allotted the sheep. We were met on the threshold by two or three servants, who went through a good deal of bowing and scraping—too much for my liking. The apartment into which he conducted me was

furnished with a rudely constructed table and two seats. I noticed his gun hanging on the wall.

The chief very politely invited me to sit down. He gave some orders to his servants, but not understanding the language I could not tell what he was saying. Considerable whispering then took place, and I began to suspect that there must be something wrong, but it was merely one of the peculiar habits of the Abyssinians, who, as I afterwards discovered, are very much given to talk in whispers. However, at the time it seemed very suspicious, and the deep salaams of the servants whenever they came near me did not inspire confidence, appearing much too abject to be genuine. With Juma acting as interpreter, I opened a conversation on general subjects, but when I touched on the interruption of my journey my host shut up at once. All that I could extract from him was that it would be all right and that we should be able to continue our journey the next day.

After a while the attendants brought in a quantity of *tej*, and when I was about to drink they began to put a cloth round me. I objected vigorously and, not understanding the reason for the proceeding, threw the cloth from me; whereupon my host said that he had no objection to my drinking without the cloth around me if I preferred it. The use of the cloth was merely due to that superstitious fear of the evil eye to which I have previously referred. The *tej* was very good, but after one or two drinks I declined any more, as I thought I had had sufficient. I am inclined to think that my host was anxious to make me drunk, but whether from other than hospitable reasons I do not know. Following the *tej*, coffee was served from an ordinary coffee-pot, without sugar, with a quantity of particularly oily butter floating on the top as a substitute for milk. The liquid refreshment was followed by the solids, in the shape of a huge dish of boiled meat, very highly seasoned with pepper, with which bread was served. I now learned that Abyssinian etiquette in eating required the guest to show his appreciation of the hospitality by making the process of mastication as disagreeably noisy as possible. The more noise one made the greater the compliment paid to one's host. Judged from this standard, my Abyssinian host evidently enjoyed his food thoroughly.

The meal occupied fully an hour, and on coming out of the hut I found quite a crowd of Abyssinians, one of whom appeared to be a chief of some importance. For his benefit the Emperor's passport was again produced. Whenever this document, with Menelik's signature attached, was brought out, all who were seated promptly rose to their feet as a sign of respect. For some reason not apparent to me, the Abyssinians appeared to be much amused at my interpreter, Juma. Whether it was that his way of pronouncing their language appealed to their sense of the ridiculous, or whether their mirth arose from some other cause I do not know; but as Juma took it all in good part, I thought it wiser not to notice anything.

The chief accompanied me back to my camp, which was pitched

at a place called Shabadin, and during the day we had quite a number of visitors bringing in food. The chief, who remained in my camp overnight, seemed very intelligent, and I found that he had had a wide experience of elephant hunting, which is considered a great accomplishment in Abyssinia, the killing of each pachyderm being regarded as equal to annihilating ten men—in fact, as equivalent to a patent of nobility. I gave the chief some blankets, and he returned home in the morning after receiving a present of a sparklet bottle and half a dozen bulbs for making soda water, with which he appeared to be highly delighted. It came out in conversation that this man, whose name was Balamal Sigga, had been something of a traveller, having visited Aden and Bombay among other places, which perhaps accounted for the fact that he was decidedly more intelligent than the local Natives.

Other visitors called on me during the afternoon, including the principal chief of the district, a fine-looking, intelligent old man, who told me that all people passing through that district were stopped at that spot. I gave him more sparklet water and, as he was about to drink, his followers became greatly alarmed and wished to put a sheet around him, in accordance with their custom. This he would not allow, however, saying that he was perfectly safe in the presence of a friendly white man. His followers were not so confident and crowded closely around him so that no one should see him drink. To show that I was not affected by superstitious qualms of this kind, I made my servants arrange my meals outside my tent, where crowds of Natives came to watch the white man who thus defied the Fates, and went away firmly convinced that some dreadful calamity would shortly befall me.

During the day one of the headmen told me that, although no news had yet been received from Allata, I might start the next morning, and he would give me an escort of soldiers to see me on the way. This change of tone was probably due to my expressed intention of making a report of the delay to the Emperor, as I had been assured at Addis Ababa that, with a passport under the Emperor's own hand, no one in the country had the power or would dare to hinder me on my journey.

The same day a man named Uluku brought me a present of some sheep. Now it is the rule in Abyssinia that when anyone gives a present of sheep or cattle he expects to receive a bigger present in return. This fact had been carefully impressed upon me by my own followers. However, as I had nothing big to give him, I told Uluku, through the interpreter, that I had travelled a very long way and had given all my presents away. He wanted a gun, and when he found that I was not going to give him one he drove the sheep off again, but did not go very far away. As he continued to hang about the camp I gave him some fancy cloth and a few knives, and other similar trifles, at the same time explaining that when we gave anything we did not expect something in return. At last he went away, but was too much ashamed to take the sheep back with him.

I prepared to continue my journey on the strength of the headman's statement that I could go on in the morning. As my boys were taking my tent down, the headman came up demanding to know who had given me permission to proceed. I retorted that I was not a child to be played with; and asked him what he meant by telling me the previous day that I could go on and now trying to stop me again? I told him, further, that now I had commenced packing up I should either proceed on my journey or else return to Addis Ababa and report the matter to the Emperor. As I was on the point of leaving, wondering which way to go — whether to go back one march, or to try to get through and risk the consequences—the headman returned, saying that I could proceed, as news had just arrived from the big chief at Allata that I was to be allowed to go on. Why I had been stopped I never discovered.

Continuing our journey south, we passed through a district called Allata, a beautiful agricultural and grazing country, rather mountainous, with plenty of water, and inhabited by the Arussi tribe. There was a big Abyssinian military force here, under a general, or *dejazmach*, named Balcha.

In one village I found two stores, one kept by an Indian and the other by a Swiss. The latter seemed a very decent fellow, and fortunately I was sufficiently acquainted with German to understand what he said. He told me that he had a great deal of trouble with the Natives, who were trying their best to drive him out of the country. They came into his store and insulted him, and if he ventured to retort he was promptly arrested and haled before a Native magistrate ,who fined him ten or twenty dollars. As he said, what could he do? He was entirely alone, and never saw the general in charge of the district. Apart from these little unpleasantnesses, however, he was getting on fairly well. In the highlands there was a great deal of honey, and he was doing a thriving business in beeswax. He had had very great difficulties in connection with the building of his house, for the Abyssinians would not do the work, and the Natives of the district, the Arussi, seemed to be in too great fear of the consequences if they did anything for a white man in defiance of the wishes of their Abyssinian masters.

There was quite a large quantity of rubber in this neighbourhood, the hilly country appearing to be covered with rubber trees. I learnt that a company had already secured rubber concessions from Menelik, but so far they had done nothing towards developing their interests. In a neighbouring valley much coffee was growing wild. It had evidently been well cultivated at one time, but had been given up; several tons might have been obtained for the trouble of gathering.

The village afforded a magnificent view of Lake Regina Margherita (or, as the Natives call it, Lake Abaya). Before moving

on I laid in a large quantity of cloth from one of the village stores, for I was told that along the further stages of my journey this material was employed as local currency, and I expected it would be necessary to buy camels with it to transport the ivory which I had undertaken to convey to Nairobi. Incidentally, the Natives regaled me with many alarming stories of the robbers who infested the roads ahead.

We had two Abyssinian soldiers as guides, and they looked for all the world like a couple of early Christian Fathers. I said to Selland, "What do they put you in mind of?" And he promptly replied, "Two fellows out of the Bible," and this exactly represented them.

We were now travelling through a very fertile though mountainous country, very much like my old, familiar Kikuyuland. We camped at a spot from which we could see the general's fort, built on the highest peak of a big mountain, about three hours' march to the eastward. We had hardly begun the ascent of the mountain range when we met a mounted company of Abyssinian soldiers, fully five hundred strong. They were an interesting sight, in their picturesque uniforms, with their horses gaily decked with fancy saddlery, embellished with silver, brass and copper. They made a very brave show, but my admiration was mixed with a slight feeling of uneasiness as to the reception we should get at their hands. My astonishment was considerable when, as we approached, the whole body dismounted, and made way for us to pass through them, which we did without further incident. I had previously told Selland to keep perfectly cool, as it was certain that if they intended attacking us they would take advantage of some misunderstanding. I felt sure that the general would know better than wantonly to interfere with anyone provided with the Emperor's passport.

This country was beautiful and thickly populated by a tribe apparently akin to the Bantu. They were, of course, governed by the Abyssinians, who seemed to have a very good time, apparently having nothing to do but drink *tej*, while the Natives did all the work—building the houses, cultivating the crops, tending the cattle, or anything else their masters required. In fact, the Natives were practically in a state of slavery, and I was told that, in addition to providing their lords with food and drink, they were taxed five dollars per head per annum.

On the way up the mountain I noticed a number of stone pillars, some of them erect, though many had fallen. These massive columns appeared to be of very great age, and were not of Abyssinian workmanship. I imagined that they formed part of a temple or palace belonging to some higher civilization of bygone ages. I could obtain no local information as to the origin of the pillars, or how they came to be there, beyond a tradition to the effect that many years ago a race of giants had dwelt there, and having enormously large horses had raised these pillars to hitch them to. This legend was fully

accepted by both the Abyssinians and the Natives. I should have liked to have made some excavations with a view to tracing their history, but time did not permit. Later, when I questioned the general with regard to them, he was dumb, evidently not wishing to discuss the subject.

At the top of the mountain our guides disappeared, and after waiting for some time my men set to work to find a suitable camping place. We were just moving off when the guides returned with an *agafare*, or master of ceremonies, who said he would show me where to camp. He led me to a large hut enclosed by a bamboo fence, between fifteen and twenty feet high. Entering the enclosure by a big door, I was led into the hut, which had evidently been prepared for my reception. It had been newly swept out and fresh rushes laid on the ground, while in a corner to the right of the entrance was what looked like a small throne raised a little off the ground; on this I was invited to seat myself.

No sooner had I seated myself than a Native appeared, driving before him a big black bullock. Behind came thirty women, each bearing a present from the general, everything they carried being draped in red. Besides the bullock the presents included ten baskets of Native bread, ten *gombos* of *tej*, some firewood, and barley for my animals. Everything was presented as I sat on my throne, and as each of the black damsels deposited her burden at my feet she prostrated herself before me and then withdrew. As much honour and deference were shown to me as if I had been a king, and I was naturally greatly impressed with the dignity of my position.

Before retiring for the night I drank some of the *tej*, which seemed good, though very sweet. I also ate a little of some special meat which the general had sent. I had no idea how it was prepared, except that it was very highly seasoned, but immediately after eating it I was seized with an attack of vomiting, and was violently sick throughout the whole night. Next morning I had a nasty headache, and Selland also complained of the same thing, which we attributed to the high altitude, as we were then about 12,000 feet above sea level. The climate was decidedly unpleasant, the place being shrouded in a perpetual fog, very damp and cold.

After breakfast I prepared to visit the general, and decided to don evening dress. Nothing impresses the Abyssinians so much as dress, and—to use a vulgarism—"swank." The Emperor Menelik made it a rule that any civilan European coming into his presence should wear evening dress, and I had no doubt that the general was aware of this, and would appreciate the same respect being shown to him as was accorded the Emperor; but dressing up in this fashion did appear somewhat ludicrous in such surroundings.

Taking six mounted men, I sallied forth into the street. All the houses were enclosed by high bamboo fences like that allotted to me. It was apparent that all the work was done by the local

Natives, but they appeared to be happy and contented enough—in fact, all those I saw were singing merrily over their various tasks. As he had at least some thousands of Natives round Abara all working for him, the general must have been getting rich. The streets were all paved with wood, or corduroyed; they would otherwise have been impassable owing to the damp atmosphere.

Making my way through the thick mist, I arrived at the general's house, and was conducted through several courtyards to the front of a big hut. Although it was Sunday, there was a good deal of stir and bustle, many people appearing to have business with the general. Ushered into his presence, I found him seated cross-legged on a throne to the right of the entrance. He had his face covered with a cloth, only one eye being visible, so that I was unable to distinguish his features. A seat was placed near him, and this I was invited to occupy. The apartment was large and handsomely appointed, the floor covered with Turkish carpets, and the ceiling composed of reed work of various colours in a circular design.. Above the throne was a canopy, lined with red and draped with red curtains. The general kept his court with something like royal state. Round the room were ranged about fifty men, beneath whose *shammas* I occasionally caught a glimpse of rifles. A number of personal attendants were grouped around the throne, and every movement of the dusky potentate was followed with servile attention.

Through my interpreter I explained my business, and asked him why my caravan had been stopped, particularly stressing my anxiety to push on in order to avoid being overtaken by the rains in that cold country. He assured me that there would be no further trouble while I was going through his territory, which extended to the Abyssinian boundary; and he promised to give me guides the whole way, and to provide ample food for my animals and men.

I had brought him for a present one of the only possessions of value left to me—a Mauser pistol with about four hundred rounds of ammunition. It had accompanied me in all my wanderings for years without ever being of any special use, so I was not very grieved at parting with it. I was proceeding to explain its mechanism when the general quietly rose in his seat, turned round, and produced two others exactly like it from under him. This gave me somewhat of a shock, as I had thought my pistol would be a novelty to him.

During the interview I caught him several times looking at me with his unveiled eye, which I have since learnt was considered a mark of disrespect. When I inquired about the other eye, he replied that it hurt him. It so happened that there were in my baggage some goggles that I had bought in a frivolous moment; so I sent round for a pair of these and presented them to him, which seemed to please him greatly. He then said that I could continue my journey on the following day.

We left Abara the following morning and, descending the moun-

tain, camped at a place called Elalcha. In the afternoon I called on the local chief, who rejoiced in the high sounding name of Kanyazmach Salima Mackay. He seemed very intelligent, and after a long talk about the country and things in general, I invited him to come over to my camp later in the day. He came, bringing me a sheep, three *gombos* of *tej*, and some baskets of bread. He was a relative of the general. I presented him with a Browning pistol which, as there were only five rounds of ammunition left for it, was not of much use to us. The chief did not appear to be greatly struck with it at first, regarding it more as a toy than a weapon; but when I fired off the five rounds in quick succession he accepted it with pleasure, in spite of the fact that there was now no ammunition for it. He got over this difficulty by giving me an order for a further supply of ammunition, a gramophone, and an elephant gun—orders which I had no intention of executing. The following day the Natives brought me five mule loads of barley from the general, who kept his promise with regard to the guides. In fact, from this time on he provided me with all my *safari* required.

At Basuka, excellent grazing country, thinly populated, the Natives were Gallas, who did little agriculture, but raised cattle.

Hills, wood and forests were the principal features of the country through which our march now took us, and, in more favourable weather the scenery would have made the way very enjoyable; but the bad roads and the discomfort of the rain made it anything but a pleasant journey to us. At Guchi, still in the Galla country, I bought twenty large bags of barley, for which the chief promised to provide me with carriers; but he afterwards refused to carry out his promise, on the ground that the men were afraid to travel with a white man.

This was the last food station until we reached Nairobi, and the real difficulties of the march were now before us. We had now reached the foot of the mountains, and hoped to be out in the plain in a day or two. For eight days we had not had a glimpse of the sun, having experienced nothing but rain, fog and mist during our passage through the mountain.

At the Dowa river which we crossed, I had been warned to be very careful, as the grass near the river was poisonous. We therefore muzzled all the animals and led them until we were through the danger zone. The next day's route took us through the same kind of country, which evidently joined the Dowa lower down. The grass near this river was also poisonous, so we had to camp some distance away, and again led the animals down to water. As a further precaution against their being poisoned, I had had a number of nosebags made of cotton-cloth, and each animal had one of these put on before going down to the river, while I myself went on ahead further to guard against the possibility of any mishap. It was as well that this was done, for otherwise all my precautions would have been in vain. I found, as the men came along with the horses and mules, that

every animal had had its nosebag taken off ! We had been at great pains to make these bags, and now these idiots had taken them off just at the moment when they were most required. The next few minutes were uncommonly lively for the offenders, and then we had a pleasant time getting all the bags on again before any mishap occurred.

This was the last river we had to cross. We resumed our march next day through a similar country; bushy, dry and rocky, and not a sign of any living creatures anywhere around, except ourselves. Our road now took us up again into the hills, here inhabited by the Boran. It seemed very good grazing country. We halted at Arero, an Abyssinian frontier post, the chief of which came to see me in the afternoon, bringing a bullock and seventeen *gombos* of milk. This man, though only a minor chief, had a force of fifty armed men, whom he did not forget to display. Not a few of them came to me to be doctored for bad feet. All the Abyssinians in this district seemed to be in bad health, probably due to the climate, Arera being in the lowlands.

On resuming the march we had an amusing experience with our Arabs. One day the whole lot lined up in front of my tent, saying that they would not go any further unless they received their proper rations. It was really a fuss about nothing, as they were getting everything for which they engaged, with the exception of *ghee*, or clarified butter. Although I had brought a very large quantity of the stuff, it had been used up on the road, and my stock was now practically exhausted. They demanded four ounces per day per man, and they were ten. As it would still take us four or five months to get home, to comply with their demands meant that I should require several camel loads. Being now clear of Abyssinian officials, I could afford to be a little more independent, and decided to temporise.

Calling out the man who had the most to say, I asked him what he did with his four ounces of butter a day. When he replied that he ate it, I said, " Well, we'll see what you *can* eat," and ordered some to be brought. A decent-sized cup having been filled right up to the brim, I gave him a spoon and said, " Now, let's see what you can do with that." To say that I was surprised when he polished off the whole lot is to put it mildly. If all Arabs could eat ghee like that I had evidently made a mistake in not providing a larger stock. Still, I was not quite satisfied, so calling the next man I gave him a cupful, but the job was too big for him, and he very soon gave in; I could also see that the first man was now beginning to feel decidedly uncomfortable. The Abyssinians who had been watching the proceedings thought it a huge joke, and roared with laughter, especially when all the other Arabs proved quite unequal to getting through a cupful of the stuff. Having tried them all, I said, " What is the use of coming to me for fat, if you can't eat it when you get it? In future you won't get any." I explained that it was now a case of living on anything we could get, and that it would be quite impossible to keep them supplied with *ghee*. The other men of the caravan confirmed this, so the Arabs accepted the situation and the incident passed off

with a laugh.

We soon came to poor grazing country where water was rather scarce, that for the animals having to be obtained from a well about fifty feet deep, from which it was drawn by means of buckets made of giraffe hide. The people here had plenty of horses, with which they were accustomed to ride down the giraffes, of which there were large numbers in the neighbourhood. They tanned the hides and utilised them for making buckets, shields, and similar articles.

Next day we reached a well about noon. The surrounding country was very level, with a few large kopjes dotted about here and there. The inhabitants were Borans, a tribe somewhat resembling the Somali, and had plenty of cattle, camels and horses. The country was very dry, water being only obtainable at the wells, at which the Natives seemed to spend all their time watering their beasts. Agriculture was entirely neglected, and there was practically no cultivation—nor, indeed, did I expect to meet with any until we reached the Kikuyu country.

The journey was now beginning to tell on the animals, in spite of our having taken every possible care of them. Many had sore backs, which were due to leavy loading. In view of their condition I tried to get the people to sell me a few camels, but they brought in one only. for which they demanded an exorbitant price, so I decided to stay here for another day to doctor the sick camels. Eventually I procured a couple of camels and three bullocks. The Natives of this district were the richest I had ever seen in Africa, every man having large herds of cattle and many horses and camels.

It was very necessary that I should soon obtain both camels and oxen, and I took every opportunity of urging the Natives to bring in as many animals as they could, explaining that we had brought plenty of cloth which I was willing to give in exchange. But, in spite of their being by far the wealthiest tribe it has ever been my lot to meet, numbering their herds by tens of thousands—or, possibly, because of that—I experienced the greatest difficulty in obtaining any animals at all.

The matter was serious, for the caravan was now urgently in need of a fresh supply of meat. All my flour and provisions were exhausted, and we were reduced to a diet of meat and milk. The latter was to be had in plenty, and each man received a large jarful nightly, to last him through the next day. He had his ration of meat at the same time; and when we could buy bullocks they were killed and the meat cut into strips and dried.

Bullocks had to be obtained or it would be impossible to feed my men, so I asked the Natives their reason for refusing to sell me any. They replied that they were quite willing to sell them, but as they had their heads shaved that day they were not allowed to do so. They appeared to be keeping some religious festival, and told me that if the Emperor Menelik himself had come that way

they could not have sold him anything. On my inquiring how often this festival occurred, I was told that it was eight years since the last had been held. It struck me as very remarkable that we should have happened to arrive on the one day in eight years on which they were not allowed to sell bullocks. Feeling a little incredulous as to the truth of their story, an idea occurred to me, and I told them that it was an extraordinary coincidence that we also had a festival on that day; and still more curious, it was one also only held every eight years, and it so happened that I was just going to my tent to have my head shaved, after which, according to our custom, we could take anything we could get hold of, without asking. They listened very seriously while I was spinning this yarn, and then asked me to wait a while, until they could talk the matter over. In about ten minutes they returned, bringing in as many cattle as I could wish to buy.

Having satisfactorily settled this little difficulty, I took my tent and six mules and started off for the frontier post, leaving Selland to look after the camp and horses. I passed through a well-wooded mountainous country, and camped on the top of a mountain named Dukuli. There was plenty of very good grazing here, and it struck me that it would be a splendid site on which to form a permanent camp while I was buying my camels and completing my arrangments for the trip across the desert.

I had good cause to remember the next day, July 15. Striking camp at six, I found the way lay through a bushy country which seemed to get thicker every hour. By nine o'clock it was so dense that I had to dismount to pick out a path for my mule and myself. As a rule, when on the march, I went on ahead of the expedition, leaving the men to follow, but on this occasion the order was reversed. I had with me Juma, the interpreter; the headman of the Abyssinians who were going to the frontier; my syce, or groom; the gun-bearer; and the guides. They were strung out in front, while I brought up the rear.

Owing to the thick bush we were all dismounted, trying to force a path for the mules and ourselves down the side of the mountain. All at once we heard a slight noise in the bush on our right. The guide, who was next to me, spoke to me in Abyssinian, saying that it was an elephant, but I took no notice and went on, not giving the matter any serious thought, which was decidedly unwise as the wind was blowing across our path, and of course the elephant scented us as soon as we passed him. No sooner did he wind us than the brute charged at me, trumpeting furiously. I had just time to see that it was a huge animal with a magnificent pair of tusks, and that he was coming straight for me, when, before I had time to think how to act, my mule settled the question for me by taking fright and bolting madly downhill, knocking me down in its wild career.

By the time I regained my feet the elephant was within a few feet of me, looking as though it meant business. I ran as hard as

I could, with the elephant after me, still trumpeting madly. It did not appear to be gaining on me, but I certainly could not shake it off. You may be sure I was making pretty good time, but it was physically impossible for me to keep up that pace for long. As it happened, I was wearing a white helmet—a thing I should never have done had I contemplated meeting elephants—and thinking that this was a mark for my pursuer, I suddenly pulled it off, turned round, and threw it at him.

Finding that I could hold out no longer, I staked everything on a sudden plunge into the bush, and trusted to his rushing past. So I took a header into the bush on the left of the path, and threw myself flat on my face in the hope that the brute would not see me as it went past. The hope was vain. Before I could move the elephant was right over me, its fore-feet grazing my body on either side, while I saw its huge body above me like some immense canopy. Would it miss me with its hind legs? One instant of maddening suspense, an inch or two of margin to right and left as those terrible feet came down, and the animal was carried past me in its mad rush. I scrambled wildly to my feet, only to find myself flying through space, for the elephant had turned sharply and, seizing me with its trunk, had hurled me into the air. But the thick bush, which had caused my misfortune, was now to prove my salvation. As luck would have it, I was hurled straight into a tree and, clutching desperately as I fell, I managed to hold on to one of the branches and draw myself out of reach of my foe.

The elephant, standing under the tree, had seized a huge boulder, fully three feet thick, which it was throwing about, whether under the impression that it had secured the object of its chase or not, I cannot say, but I was uncommonly thankful for my lofty perch, and happy to think that the ferocious brute had found some other plaything than my carcase. After what seemed to me a very long while it tired of its amusement and moved off into the bush, but I did not venture to come down until a little later I saw my Natives returning, intently examining the ground at every step, fully expecting, I imagine, to find my mangled remains lying on the path. When they were near enough to hear me I shouted from the top of the tree, and their surprise at finding the expected corpse very much alive, though in a somewhat undignified position, is more easily imagined than described. I had come well out of my perilous adventure, as no bones were broken, and the only damage was a few bruises and a severe shaking, but it was quite as narrow a shave as I have any wish to experience.

Next day we arrived at the British Camp, Golbo, where I made the acquaintance of the British Agent who had charge of the boundary between Abyssinia and British East Africa. Here I also met an old Nairobi friend, the Marquis Hornyold, who was up in this out-of-the-way spot buying mules and cattle. We sat up very late that night discussing our various adventures.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS THE DESSERT.

As the ivory which I had undertaken to transport to Nairobi for the Government would not be ready for about six weeks — I may here mention that the ivory in question was captured from elephant poachers and Shiftas (*Bandits*) who were continually raiding our frontier — we had to be very careful in collecting the buried ivory as we were continually watched and most of the work was carried on by night to prevent recapture.

On the British side of the boundary the country is a low-lying arid waste covered with thick scrub. It appeared that the Abyssinians had got everything that was worth having in that part of the country — all the land of any value being on their side of the frontier. It is true that there were a few Borans on British territory, but by far the greater number were in the Abyssinian highlands, which are in every respect preferable to the plains, which the wily Ethiopians were doubtless willing enough to concede to Great Britain, especially as they were afraid to enter the fever-stricken belt across the frontier which our Government were at so much trouble and expense to maintain.

The descent from the mountain range in the Emperor Menelik's territory (5,000 feet above sea level) to Golbo on the boundary line of British territory, a drop of 2,000 feet, produced a marked change in the climate. The camp was in about the worst possible situation, and a few days' residence made me decide to get away as soon as I could. Every man in the camp had fever, and the Agent was worse than any of them. The men were simply dragging out an aimless existence, with nothing to do but nurse their fever and drag through the weary hours until night came again, bringing relief from the pitiless heat of the sun. There was very little food, and no well — the water being obtained from a water-hole, in which it had collected during the previous rainy season.

My time was chiefly spent in talking to Hornyold, and we were both very soon heartily sick of the whole place. My animals began to sicken, and I learnt that all horses brought from the highlands suffered in the district. I had expected to lose a number before reaching the end of my journey, but the prospect looked a good deal worse than I had anticipated. I now sent half my men back to Addis Ababa, to be paid off at the British Legation there. That left me with about twenty.

The Agent proposed that I should relieve him for about six months, saying that he was wanted at Addis Ababa, but the real reason was that he was very ill indeed with fever and thought a

change might do him good. My animals were dying every day and the obligation to wait so long for the Government ivory had altered my prospects for the worse considerably; I thought that if I agreed to relieve the Agent, I might to some slight extent make up for my losses, so I agreed to fall in with his suggestion, and we both wrote to Addis Ababa to that effect.

On August 6 I wrote in my diary: "More sick of the place every day. The Abyssinians — my own men included — are so cheeky that I can do nothing with them. Twenty-five animals have died here since my arrival."

It came as a shock to me to find that my action in flying the Union Jack was unpopular with the British Agent, who attributed the difficulties on my way down to Golbo to this hobby of mine and declared that it had already produced a lot of trouble with the Abyssinians. Anyhow, I was determined to carry the flag through to Nairobi.

Time dragged wearily, so while waiting for the ivory I took to studying the Boran tribe. When out with them one day they refused to kill a snake, and I thus discovered that they were snake worshippers, and that the chief was supposed to keep one in his hut and to feed it on butter. I also learnt that they still kept up the practice of exposing children to be devoured by the hyenas. This form of sacrifice was offered only at certain periods, and the victim might be two or three years of age or not more than six months. When the sacrifice had been decided upon, the child was placed outside the kraal at night while the father kept watch until a hyena came and took it away. This had nothing to do with want or famine, but was purely an expression of some sort of devil-worship.

There has been a good deal of conjecture as to the origin of the Masai tribe. I am firmly convinced that they hail from this part of Africa, having, in my opinion, sprung from the Somali or Gallas who inhabit the district. This belief was strengthened by comparisons I made of the Natives I met on my journey across the desert to Nairobi. For instance, the Rendile, the next tribe encountered after leaving the Galla, appeared at first sight to be Somali, but on closer acquaintance one could remark a resemblance to the Masai. These people are a nomad race, roaming over the desert and camping wherever they can find sufficient water for their large herds of cattle, camels, goats and sheep. For a nomad tribe they are very wealthy.

Next to the Rendile come the Samburu, another nomad tribe, who are undoubtedly Masai. Their name, *Samburu*, meaning "butterfly," was given to them by the old Masai, in allusion to their habit of wandering about the country without any settled place of habitation. Between the Samburu and the Masai the difference is so slight as to be almost impossible of detection, and I am convinced that thorough research would show that my conclusions as to the

origin and line of descent of the Masai were correct. But this by the way.

The Borans settled in the district around Golbo subsisted entirely on milk; and milk was the staple diet for the Agent, Selland and myself, as well as for our boys and the Abyssinians. It was surprising how well it appeared to agree with us. As a slight variation from the monotony of cow's milk, I sometimes drank camel's milk, which has a slightly saline taste.

Marquis Hornyold returned across the desert to Nairobi, and time hung even more heavily on my hands after his departure. I greatly missed his pleasant companionship, and felt the loneliness of life at this miserable camp more than ever, for Selland was still up in the highlands.

I had a pony saddled up every day and with two of my Abyssinians and a Boran as guide explored the country along the frontier; after a time I found a much better site for a camp about thirty-five miles east of our present camp, with permanent water and much healthier, named Moyale, which afterwards became the permanent British Headquarters on our Northern Frontier.

My men seemed to be getting more out of hand every day. With the departure of half my men to be paid off at Addis Ababa, some of the work had necessarily fallen upon the headman of my Abyssinian followers, who strongly objected to do any kind of work. When ordered one day to perform some small task, he flatly refused to obey, so I ordered the Government men to arrest him. This they declined to do, as I had no authority over them, wherein, perhaps, they were right. Nor would my own men carry out the arrest. Seeing me thus set at defiance all round, the headman approached and sarcastically challenged me to make him a prisoner myself. Almost before the astonished man had time to realize what was happening, I had him securely roped up, which very soon brought him to his senses. In about five minutes he was pleading for forgiveness, promising that, if I would only release him, he would do whatever he was told and give me no further trouble. Thinking that he had been taught a sufficiently severe lesson, I let him go about his work, but two or three days afterwards he disappeared, and I heard later that he had returned to Addis Ababa. Here he spun the yarn that I had tried to hang him; he had, indeed, even gone to the extent of drawing a hot iron across his throat, in order to point to the scar as the mark of the rope!

A considerable number of Somali traders along the boundary, who were in the habit of taking animals a journey of two or three months to sell at Kismayu, at the mouth of the Juba, suddenly conceived a great desire to try to find a fresh market for their stock at Nairobi, and the Agent wished me to escort them across the desert. I strongly objected, first, because I was myself taking mules and horses to Nairobi, and their simultaneous arrival would completely

spoil my market, and secondly, because, when setting out on my expedition, I had been distinctly given to understand by the then Governor of British East Africa, Mr. Jackson, that they did not want any more Somali in the Protectorate, and that I was on no account to bring any in with me. Now I was asked to escort over a hundred of these very people into Nairobi !

I declined emphatically to comply with this request, where-upon the Agent told me that, as he had to send them to Nairobi somehow, if I still refused to take them he would decline to hand over the ivory to me. Here was a pretty difficulty. As, however, I could not go without the ivory I was reluctantly obliged to consent, and we arranged conditions.

As if things were not bad enough already, I was now taken seriously ill with a mysterious sickness. So far as I knew, I had eaten nothing to account for it, and I could not think it possible that anyone had deliberately attempted to poison me. Yet for three weeks I was utterly prostrate, suffering intense pain and continually passing blood. This could hardly be due to any other cause but poison, and subsequent consideration, indeed, coupled with certain facts which came to my knowledge, convinced me that an attempt had actually been made on my life.

On October 1st the mail arrived from Addis Ababa, and in reply to my inquiry, the Agent told me that there was nothing for me, nor had Mr. Hohler of the British Legation sent any reply with regard to the proposed arrangement by which I was to act as deputy during the Agent's absence from the boundary. The Agent soon after left for Addis Ababa, placing the frontier under the charge of an Abyssinian headman, and twenty men of the same race — a proceeding which struck me as strongly resembling setting the cat to watch the cream. Still, it was not inconsistent with the generally contradictory state of affairs existing on the border at that time, whereby British subjects, or any white man, were refused permission to hunt or shoot game, while large parties of Abyssinians ignored the law and hunted as they thought fit. Some of these told me that the number of elephants shot by their hunting parties in the course of the year was at least one thousand !

I proposed leaving for Nairobi as soon as a few days' rain had fallen, for I knew that until this happened there would be no water on the route. The rains were expected by the Natives at the new moon.

Meanwhile we heard that some Gabra had been murdered by the Rendile. The Gabra were a friendly tribe, who were to lend me camels and assist me with the ivory across the desert; and it was therefore arranged that, if the charges were proved, I should see that the Rendile duly paid them blood-money for the people they had murdered.

The rains started on the 10th, and up to the 15th we had a good tropical downpour daily. Between those dates I sent to the Gabra for camels, and told the Somali who wished to accompany me across the desert to Nairobi to get ready, as I wanted to start about the 25th. On the 22nd thirty of the Gabra arrived in charge of the same number of camels. When the horses and mules were counted that night thirty-one were missing. The boys who were on grazing guard cheekily answered my questions with the threat that if I attempted to punish any of them they would all desert and return to the British Legation at Addis Ababa to be paid. On such an occasion silence was golden, for they were obviously only seeking an excuse to desert. The situation was most galling, but in the circumstances I was helpless, so everybody was turned out to look for the missing animals, and about ten o'clock eight of them came into camp of their own accord. Early the following morning I had everybody out again searching for the missing animals, all of which were recovered.

That night the Abyssinians declared that unless I gave them double rations they would all return to Addis Ababa. They knew that it was impossible to do without them just as we were on the point of leaving, or to supply their places, so there was nothing for it but to yield to their demands.

Then a horse died from what I judged to be horse-sickness. The Natives, however, told me that there was a fly about there which they call the *gandi*, which appeared to be a kind of tsetse fly, and caused this illness. They believed that it followed the elephants about, and these cattle folk always seemed to be able to detect its presence. For instance, I had noticed a patch of what appeared to be very good grazing ground in the forest, and on inquiring why they did not take their animals there, had been told, " Oh, the *gandi* fly is there." Perhaps a fortnight later they would be grazing their cattle on this very area, and if questioned would reply, " The *gandi* fly has gone."

We made the ivory up into loads and fixed them with wet hide, which, shrinking as it dried, made it impossible for anything to slip. A number of the Somali now arrived with a lot of stock but without people to look after them, apparently expecting me to find them assistance. It was a pleasant situation ! Here was I, the only Britisher, on British territory, having practically to knuckle under to a lot of Abyssinians and Somali. Yet what could I do ? Had I attempted to coerce them, the Abyssinians would have cleared out at once. So I made the best of it, and longed for the time when I should be able to assert my own authority again.

On the 29th we got everything packed up ready to start on the following morning. Some more Somali and an Arab arrived during the day to join my caravan. The latter, who had twenty-two mules, about twenty cows, and ten camels, with only six men to look after the lot, expected me to take him through to Nairobi. I refused point-

blank, and later in the day he came to my camp with the Abyssinian whom the Agent had left in charge of the frontier. This fellow, decked in his little brief authority, insisted in the most insolent manner that I should take the Arab. On my again refusing, the Abyssinian informed me that if I would not take him no one else would go with me, which, I told him, was extremely satisfactory, and confirmed me in my previous decision, for the less I saw of them all the better I should be pleased.

After so long a stay in such a camp — during which, as I have pointed out, my men had become badly demoralised — there was a good deal of confusion in making another start, and it was 9 o'clock on the 30th before everything was ready. I had engaged about half a dozen Somali to assist with the animals, and now had, in addition to the thirty Gabra with the camels (whose duties were confined to looking after those animals), twenty-six Native followers, and of course Mr. Selland, a by no means excessively large number, when it is remembered that I had twenty-eight horses, forty-eight mules, thirty-two camels, and twenty-one head of cattle, besides some sheep. I had also the 3,000 pounds of ivory which I had contracted to transport to Nairobi for the Government — altogether a fairly valuable outfit.

Setting out in a westerly direction, we passed through a country covered with thick bush. The roads were very wet and slippery, and the camels had difficulty in keeping their feet. With me were four of the Abyssinian soldiers in the employ of the British Government, whom I was taking with me into the Rendile country, where I hoped to hand over to them the men responsible for the murder of the two Gabra. The camels found it very heavy going.

A couple of nights later the Abyssinians, of whom I had thirteen, had what very nearly proved to be a serious fight with my Arab and Somali followers, Selland and myself only arriving on the scene just in time to prevent bloodshed. The two parties had been squabbling with each other ever since we left Golbo, religious questions being a fruitful source of friction, for the Abyssinians were Christians (of sorts) and the Arabs and Somali Muhammadans.

Next day we steered a westerly course over the Eledimto range. During the march we passed several Gabra villages, a tribe very much resembling the Boran, from whom they are probably descended. They have no cattle but devote themselves to rearing camels, of which they had some thousands. Changing our course to south-west, we marched the next day through a very stony country, covered with bush, which made travelling very difficult. Our camping place was absolutely destitute of water, and I was told that in the dry season the nearest spot where any could be found was three days' journey to the S.W. I had been wise to wait for the rainy season for my journey.

The next day we steered more to the west, heading for Mount

Badahuri, on the northern slope of which we found a large pool of water in a deep ravine. The sides of the ravine were far too steep for us to take the animals down to the water, so I set the boys to work to pass it up in buckets, which were emptied into a bath at the top. This process took nearly all day before all the animals were satisfied, but it was well worth while, for both the animals and men were greatly refreshed by their drink.

I was surprised to find that there were no Natives on the mountains, as the sides were fairly well wooded and afforded excellent grazing, always a precious asset in the desert. During the afternoon a Somali came into camp asking for work, and being short handed I signed him on, although I knew that in all probability he was a spy sent on by the Somali traders — who, as he told me, were all following me up — to report on the roads and the state of the country, and would probably desert later on to carry to them the information he had gained.

We crossed the higher part of Badahuri next morning, passing through a fine open country with good grazing, but no water at this time of the year, and camped on the southern slope of the mountain. Here we found lying before us a very arid country with no trace of water. The guide warned me that we should find neither water nor pasture for at least twenty-four hours after leaving this oasis, so everybody was set to work to cut grass enough to load six of our twenty spare camels.

Turning due south for the next march, we found ourselves crossing a wide plain of black volcanic rock, on which the tropical sun blazed down. Not a breath of wind stirred the air; we seemed to be marching through a furnace. The sufferings of both men and animals were intense, but there was nothing for it but to press on in the hope of finding some spot which might afford a little shelter from the terrible blaze. About noon we reached a small clump of trees, where I decided to rest my exhausted following. The trees were simply gaunt skeletons, grimly naked, without so much as a single withered leaf to relieve their bare monotony.

This was our second day without finding water, and the sufferings of men and animals were pitiable. The men had long since squeezed out the last remaining drops from their bottles, while I had only a scanty supply in my own; and when I took it out to drink it was pathetic to see the way in which the animals, scenting, with marvellous instinct, the precious fluid, crowded round with lolling tongues, struggling to lick the bottle. Fortunately our sufferings were soon to be relieved. About four o'clock the sky suddenly became overcast, and a tropical thunderstorm, accompanied by heavy rain, broke over our camp. Never was rain more welcome, or the discomfort of a thorough wetting more lightly borne. Men and animals gathered anxiously around every hollow in the rock in which

water had collected and drank their fill greedily. The storm was most providential, as, had we been obliged to make another march before finding water, the loss, both in men and animals, would probably have seriously crippled the expedition. My forethought in loading the six camels with grass at the previous halt was amply repaid by the pleasure with which the animals attacked their food, after having satisfied their thirst.

With men and animals alike refreshed, we continued our southward march next morning.

Only those who have travelled across it — and they are up to the present few among white men — can possibly realise what it means to toil day after day, under the terrific heat of an African sun, over the surface of this terrible black desert.

The next day's march lay through a waterless desert, with not a blade of grass to be seen anywhere, and, while I pitied the animals, I could not help thinking how much worse their plight would have been but for the providential thunderstorm of the previous day, and the six camel-loads of grass brought on from the earlier camp. In the course of this day's march the Abyssinian soldiers managed to shoot a rhinoceros, considered a great feat by the Natives, though as a contribution to the larder worse than useless, as even the Native followers would not eat the meat. The camp was very merry in the evening, the Natives holding a big dance to celebrate the occasion and making the night hideous with their merry-making.

From the place where we camped that night to the next point where we might hope to find water was three days' good marching, and I had considerable misgiving as to how the animals, particularly the mules, would stand it.

We pushed on until about eleven the next day, when it became too hot to go farther without giving the animals a rest; and during this halt we experienced another of those strokes of luck which had more than once lightened my anxiety. One of the boys, prowling round our halting place, discovered tracks of Rendile, and following them up found that they led to a small pool of warm, muddy, sickly-smelling liquid, which was the nearest approach to water to be found in that parched land. Unpleasant as it was to smell and taste, we were too thankful for finding it at all to cavil much at the quality. All the animals having had a drink, we pushed on again and camped near a Rendile village, the inhabitants of which — as were all the Natives we had met so far — appeared very friendly. It was a marvel to me how the tribe managed to exist in such a barren and dry country. Certainly they had no cattle; and possibly the camels, sheep and goats which formed their wealth had become inured, by lifelong habit, to the hard conditions of life in such a land.

The Gabra who were accompanying me now intimated that they wished to return, but I told them they must go with me as far as

Marsabit, so that I could settle the matter of the two murders into which I had been commissioned to inquire; and also because I could not let them leave me until I had an opportunity of arranging for camels to take the place of those they had brought.

CHAPTER VI.

OVER THE MOUNTAINS TO NAIROBI.

On November 10 we began the ascent of Mount Marsabit, the lower slopes of which proved barren and rocky; but we were fortunate enough to come across a pool of fairly good water, by which we halted. As one of the mules and three horses had broken down on the road, I decided to remain where we were for the rest of the day; and Selland was sent back, with two camels carrying water, to try to bring them in, for I knew that we could be hardly more than a long day's march now from good grazing ground, upon which I intended to camp for at least ten days. This would give all the animals a thorough rest, after which there was every hope that I might yet manage to get them all through to Nairobi. Finally we managed to get all the animals into camp, with the exception of two horses. The Rendile still continued to be very friendly, and brought me four more sheep, for which they were given a present of cloth, which highly pleased them.

The Abyssinians were getting more insolent every day. Indeed, it was only with the greatest difficulty, and by the exercise of considerable tact, that any work could be got from them at all. If I punished them, I knew that they would all desert, in the hope of getting back with the Gabra and the four soldiers, who would all be starting on their return journey in the course of a few days. But I promised myself to put them in their places at an appropriate moment.

Continuing the ascent of Marsabit the next morning, we halted at the first good grazing we had seen since leaving Badahuri. During the afternoon one of the Somali reported that a camel was badly cut in the left forefoot. Of course, it might have been due to the terrible road, but it looked more like a cut with a knife or spear. Whether it had been done by the Rendile or by one of my own men, it was impossible to find out. Again, it might have been a trick on the part of the Abyssinians to get the Somali into trouble, as the two factions were always fighting. They would no doubt argue that, as the camel was in charge of the Somali, I should conclude that they were the offenders and punish them accordingly. I did nothing in the matter just then, but waited and watched in the hope of detecting the guilty party later.

At this camp the horse which had accompanied me all the way

from Dire Daoua died. I felt as if I had lost an old friend; and it seemed hard to lose him after bringing him through the worst part of the journey. The Abyssinians, who were taking every possible advantage of the difficulties of my position, again demanded extra rations of meat. There was no alternative but to grant their demands in order to prevent their deserting; but it went sorely against the grain.

The camel that had been injured two days previously died during the next day. Whoever had been guilty of this cruelty knew very well what he was about. When a camel is cut in a certain way in the foot, it is quite impossible for the wound to heal; and the offender must have known that the animal would inevitably die. However, I punished the unknown culprit by giving strict orders that none of the flesh was to be eaten.

In the afternoon we made our way to the summit of the mountain to have a look at the Crater Lake which was about four miles from our camp. The way lay through a fine forest, beautiful even for the tropics. It is almost impossible to describe the effect of the sudden change from arid waste to the Eden-like spot we had now reached. From hunger, thirst and torrid heat we had been suddenly transported to a land of ease and plenty. Even the animals shared our delight at the change. They had dragged their weary feet over scorching rock, with downcast heads and dejected mien: now they throughly enjoyed the succulent grazing in the cool atmosphere of the mountain height, with the prospect of a good rest before they had again to take up the burden of the road.

This mountain has recently been made famous by the well-known American film-takers, Mr. and Mrs. Martin Johnson, who have made it their headquarters for some years and have lectured on its mysteries in various parts of the world. The Crater Lake they have renamed Lake Paradise, which is quite a suitable title.

Stretching before us up the mountain, in the direction of the Crater Lake, lay a fine broad road through a magnificent avenue of stately trees. This road, which had been made in the course of generations by game and by the Rendile taking their cattle to water, led directly to the lake lying in the heart of the crater of the extinct volcano of Marsabit. The air, 4,000 feet above sea level, was delightfully cool and pleasant, and we all much appreciated our drink of the clear, pure water.

On the way up I had noticed the guide jump several times, as if to clear some obstacle in the path. It turned out that on each occasion he had come across a snake. These were particularly plentiful on the mountain, and were apparently dangerous, as one of my best mules, which was unfortunately bitten in the leg, died very soon afterwards, in spite of all we could do.

The four Abyssinian soldiers and the Gabra camel-men were

eager to start on their return journey, but I was anxious to keep them with me until the question of the murders had been settled. We had made friends with the Rendile whom we had already met, which would make the work of clearing up the crime very much easier. They insisted on going, however, and I had to give way, for I had no real authority to detain them; but I had a strong suspicion that they had some private motive for wishing to leave in such a hurry, and subsequent events proved that this was correct. They left next morning and proceeded to a Rendile village some distance away, where they camped.

Now that the Gabra had left, I well knew that we had a difficult time in front of us unless the Rendile could be induced to give me substantial assistance with the ivory; for I had now only thirty camels left and was particularly anxious to avoid overloading the mules. More camels had to be obtained somewhere, and this was not possible unless the goodwill of the Rendile could be secured.

News was brought in during the day that the Abyssinians and Gabra intended to make a start for Golbo on the following morning. None of the Rendile had as yet visited our present camp, and I could not understand why nothing had been heard of the Somali traders who were supposed to have started from Golbo the day after we left, and were to follow our track. Had they started as they proposed, they should certainly have been within a short distance of us by this time, even if they had not managed to overtake us.

My suspicions that the Abyssinian soldiers had some ulterior motive in wishing to leave in such a hurry were now confirmed, for the Natives reported that they were carrying out a small raid on their own. They were going round the villages compelling every Rendile who owned sheep to hand over a dozen to them, on the plea that they were for me !

Finding that the camels were not doing so well on the high land, on account of the constant rain, I sent them down to the plain under charge of four of the Arabs, where they could graze with those of the Rendile. Then I set out to make a few inquiries as to the doings of my late escort. I reached a Rendile village which they had just left, after having commandeered ten sheep in my name. Sending two men after them with a message that I wished to speak to them before they left the district, I had a long talk with the Rendile, pointing out that I always paid for any animals for my own use and that they were not on my account to hand over any more sheep without payment. I paid them for those which had been already taken under the pretext that they were for me. The messengers sent to the Abyssinians returned saying that the latter refused to meet me and had threatened to shoot the men sent after them. Later on I wondered whether, having regard to the peculiar moral ideas of the Rendile, the Abyssinians' method of obtaining what they wanted was not better than my own; for, being in somewhat urgent need of a few lengths of

camel rope, for the better securing of the loads, I sent to the Rendile for them. Much to my surprise, they refused to sell me any, and Selland had to get over the difficulty by shooting a buffalo. This beast was then skinned and the hide cut into strips, or *reims*, which served our purpose. Apparently the Rendile thought better of their attitude on reflection, for, soon after our return to camp that evening, some of them came in with some sheep and half-a-dozen pieces of camel rope.

In the morning I sent out four men with cloth to try to buy a few more sheep, and to find out whether the Abyssinians were still at their tricks with the Natives. I had heard that they were trying to induce the Rendile not to meet me, fearing, no doubt, that if they did I should hear all about the sheep raiding and punish them for it. As, however, the Rendile themselves were quite willing to interview me and talk matters over, I went with three men to my previous camping ground, which had been selected as our meeting place as there were two large villages there. The chief, a very fine old man, was awaiting me, and I delighted his heart by presenting him with a suit of somewhat worn clothes.

We had considerable difficulty in carrying on a conversation. I first made my remarks to Juma (my interpreter) in Swahili, who translated them to an Abyssinian, who rendered it to an old Rendile woman who happened to understand Amharic, and she finally turned it into the Rendile tongue for the benefit of the chief. Lengthy conversation was an impossibility, and even the short sentences we used underwent some curious transformations before reaching their final destination. However, in spite of the obstacles, we managed to arrange matters satisfactorily, and I now found myself on excellent terms with the Rendile, who brought in presents of milk every day and agreed to sell me the camels I required and to help me with the ivory.

A few days later I had a visit from a large party of the tribe, and, according to my usual custom, I gave each one a present. About this point I was very particular, for, although the articles given might be worth possibly only a penny or even less, it pleased the Natives and went a long way towards fostering the friendly feeling towards the white man which it was always my endeavour to promote among the tribes with whom I had dealings in the course of my various journeys.

The men who had been sent to follow the Abyssinians now reported that they had raided about forty sheep from the Rendile. On the arrival of my men, the Abyssinians asked what they were doing there, and on being told that they had come to buy sheep for me, ordered them to buy nothing without first obtaining their permission, as they were the masters of the Rendile country ! They also refused to allow the men to obtain food, water or guides. For all practical purposes these four Abyssinians had charge of the country and could do as they liked, with no one to say them nay; and Selland and I,

the only white men between the frontier and Nairobi, counted for nothing.

My inquiries into the murders revealed that the man responsible was a very powerful Rendile chief who lived at a village some distance away, and news was brought in that the Abyssinians and Gabra had set off to arrest him. This was a decidedly risky proceeding on their part, as they were going the right way to get cut up.

During the last day, spent at the Marsabit camp buying camels and preparing the loads for another start, I found that the old chief was anxious to send me by the wrong road, which would take us over rocky ground similar to that which had given us so much trouble on our previous marches. After a straight talk which somewhat upset him, a few more presents quickly soothed his ruffled feelings, and we parted the best of friends. He promised that his people should give me any help I wanted, and left some of his men in the camp to act as guides and help with the camels.

Next morning I turned everybody out at half-past three only to find that the Rendile men — though owning so many of the animals — did not understand how to load camels ! This, it seemed, was always done by their women. So we had to turn to and load them all ourselves. Our first day's experience was hardly encouraging. But I found that my luck had not utterly deserted me even now, for during the afternoon of the next day the Somali traders arrived at my camp in a much less independent mood. They were very anxious to travel with me to Nairobi, and if I would undertake to protect them they would in return give me any help that might be required in loading the camels. So the bargain was struck on these terms and we arranged to make a fresh start next day. The villagers brought us some milk and five sheep, which latter were given to the camel men, much to their delight.

My experience with camels on this journey quite destroyed any faith I had ever had in the marvellous stories of escapes made from desert tribes by stealing fast camels and departing under cover of darkness. It was impossible to load a camel without the whole neighbourhood becoming aware of what was going on, and directly any attempt was made to induce the brute to lie down — a necessary preliminary to the loading — he commenced to moan and groan while great tears coursed down his face. To anyone watching the operation of loading for the first time it would appear that the animals were being most grossly ill-treated, but those who know them will tell you that is simply the usual daily performance at loading time.

The Rendile came into camp in the morning, and I obtained three camels from them to make up my number, giving them three cows in exchange, and I presented the chief, Musugari, with a horse so we parted on the best of terms. That night we camped near a Samburu village, the inhabitants of which brought in the usual gifts of milk and sheep; according to my custom, cloth was given in return.

The demeanour of the Abyssinians had altered considerably for the better since they had got away from their own people. They were very much easier to manage, and from this time till we arrived at our journey's end they gave very little trouble.

Getting the animals loaded was now much easier, for the Somali traders thoroughly understood the work. Our road continued over difficult and rocky country, barren of vegetation, and after a stifling march of five hours we pitched camp near some rain-water pools and decided to rest for the remainder of the day.

Refreshed by the long halt, by three next morning everyone was preparing to resume the march, but an amusing incident nearly lost us all the advantage of our early rising. It was the rule for the cook and myself to go on ahead of the caravan, mounted, so that we could select a camping-place. This enabled the cook to get the meal under way before the rest came up; and, in order not to overwork the animals, we selected fresh mounts each day. On this particular morning the cook chose a rather frisky mule, which he duly saddled up and loaded with his pots and pans and other utensils. It was not quite light when the cook's mule got restive and began prancing around, which of course made the tins rattle. Startled by the unusual sound, he began to kick and finally bolted, his metallic burden making a fine clatter. Dashing among the mules and camels, he scared them out of their senses, and the whole outfit stampeded. Luckily, I had already saddled up and at once dashed off in pursuit. Camels, horses, and mules were racing off in every direction, but I soon overhauled them, and, the Abyssinians being good runners, we managed between us to round them up, so that in about half an hour all were back in camp.

Close to Mount Laudermut we halted for the day. The grazing was good and all the animals enjoyed a full feed. From this camp we steered south by west, halting next morning near the dry bed of a river, where we were fortunate enough to find a few waterholes still full. The country about here was much drier and the only Natives we saw were some members of a tribe called the Lasamis. This showed that the Samburu had moved away, and, as I learned later, in the direction of the Uaso Nyiro. As the guide informed me that water was likely to be uncertain farther on, I delayed my start until next noon to let the animals have a good drink and to load up a supply to take with us.

Next day the road lay through a dried-up country, without water or grazing, while the heat was terrific. I had an encounter with a rhino which might have put an end to my journeyings. While I was ahead of the caravan, the beast charged me and got within ten yards before his career was stopped by a lucky shot.

We now changed our course to the south-west, and after four hours' march were lucky enough to find water in some pools in a dried-up river bed. Only a few patches of spare grass were to be

found, of which we took advantage to give the poor animals some sort of a feed. So scattered were the tufts that we had to lead the animals to them.

On December 4 we moved on, keeping to the east until we came to some water-holes in the bed of one of the numerous dried-up streams with which this part of the country abounded. The grazing was fairly good, certainly better than anything we had seen for some days, and the Somali traders were anxious to halt for the remainder of the day; but knowing that this was about the time of the rainy season around Mount Kenya, I grudged every minute's delay, for I feared that very shortly the Uaso Nyiro, at ordinary times a placid enough stream, would be converted into a roaring torrent, and unless we could get over before the waters came down it would be impossible to cross for weeks. I was anxious, too, to get into touch with the Samburu as soon as possible, to exchange some of my cows for sheep, partly for food for the men and partly for trade. In any case, we were now making such short treks each day that any delay was likely to prove fatal to our chances of crossing the river.

The following day we passed through bushy country with much better grazing and great quantities of game. Nearly every species of animal to be found in that part of Africa was seen, particularly the rhinoceros; and it frequently became necessary for me to dismount and cover one of these animals with my rifle until the caravan had passed. We camped without seeing, as yet, any signs of the Samburu, although the guide told me that we ought to reach the Uaso Nyiro by the following afternoon, and I had certainly expected to find some of them on the north side of the river.

Setting out on what we hoped was our last stage on that side of the stream, we found the bushy country continued as full of game as on the previous march, but our anxiety to reach the river while it was passable prevented our paying attention to anything but the need of getting on as rapidly as possible. Shortly after noon we were relieved to sight the Uaso Nyiro stretching across the plain before us. This was the first watercourse that could be called a river which I had come across since leaving the Dowa, six hundred miles behind us in Abyssinia. My first feeling was one of thankfulness that we had arrived in time; for, had the waters come down, its present width of some twenty yards would have expanded to an enormous extent, and the stream would have been much too strong for the animals to tackle.

As soon as the river came in sight there was a general quickening of the pace, and finally men and animals rushed into the stream, to drink their fill and bathe their parched bodies in the cool water. Finding that the water was not more than waist deep, we got all the animals over without any trouble. This was an easier operation than I expected, for it is generally believed that camels are afraid of running water and I was prepared for difficulties with them. But they walked across without hesitation and, being high out of the water,

it was not necessary to unload them. Thus, much to my relief, we got the ivory across — and just in time. It rained fairly heavily during the night and by the morning the river had already risen several feet. In place of the slow-moving, waist-deep stream of the day before, we saw a broad stretch of roaring water, against which no camel could have kept his feet for a minute. Had we delayed for another twelve hours on the northern side, it would have been all up with the expedition, as we should not have been able to cross for some weeks. As it was, our meagre stock of provisions caused me anxiety.

Deciding to remain where we were for the rest of the day, I went out to try my luck with a hook and line, hoping to vary our eternal meat and milk diet. A couple of good-sized barbel, or mud-fish, were promptly caught and handed to the cook to prepare, and I thoroughly enjoyed my dinner that day after the weary monotony of our former menu; but, much to my surprise, Selland declined to join me in the feast. After I had finished I asked why he would not have any fish. He replied, " I was once out with two fellows who made a meal of the same kind of fish, and they both died, poisoned." I thought he might have mentioned the fact a little earlier, but I suffered no ill-effects.

We were now compelled to follow the course of the river, for the guides were entirely ignorant of the country on that side of the stream, but after some difficulties and delay one of my men brought in two Samburu, who told us that their people were camping on the Uaso Nyiro, to the west of us, to which spot they guided us. Reaching a place called Neuman's Camp, we were lucky enough to find in a deserted hut a few beans which someone had left behind, and these, with some more which the Samburu brought in, proved very acceptable, as for over a month we had been without even flour or rice, and of course had had no vegetables.

Staying here all the next day, I exchanged three cows with the Natives for sheep, getting thirty-five sheep for each cow ! Certainly the sheep were very small, but I was glad enough to get them, both for trading purposes and to try to satisfy the enormous appetites of my Abyssinian followers. Whatever virtues these people may possess, they undoubtedly number gluttony among the most prominent of their numerous vices, and, however generous their rations, they never seemed satisfied. This day I gave them a sheep, as usual, with a good portion of beans, but they immediately demanded another sheep ! It was quite usual for me to give them two sheep in a day, when the stock allowed it; then they would cut out certain parts which they fancied and throw the rest of the carcase away.

I decided to start later each day now, on account of the horse-sickness which I feared to find in this part of the country. It is a firm belief throughout the whole of Africa that horses which are allowed to graze before the dew is off the grass run a very serious risk of

contracting this disease, though some people attribute it to the mosquito, the insect which gets the blame for carrying most diseases in Africa. The old Dutch settlers, however, always insist that the infection is contained in the dew.

The Samburu, much to my surprise, turned nasty at the last minute, and very impudently refused me guides to the next camp. We therefore followed the Uaso Nyiro for some miles, camping by a small river which flows into it.

The Samburu had told me that I should meet more of the tribe here, but we saw no traces of them, and being uncertain as to the road we waited all the next day in the hope that some of them might show up. I was a good deal puzzled to account for the attitude of the tribesmen, as it was difficult to understand not only why they should wish to lead us astray but why they kept out of our way so persistently. I therefore determined to stay where we were, and sent men out in every direction to scour the country for Samburu or any other Natives that might be found. One of them, who had gone up the stream by which we were camped, returned, bringing with him two Samburu, with the news that there were plenty of them at a spot about ten miles from our camp. Finding that there were also some Samburu kraals farther up the Uaso Nyiro, I decided to shift camp there next day, as it was on our way to Nairobi and seemed a likely place at which to exchange the rest of my cattle for sheep.

Then we went on, steering west by south for a large range of mountains. Here my misfortunes began with the death of one of my best horses, which I attributed to its having eaten some poisonous herb. Next morning we entered a deep pass, and, following the winding path along the bottom of the ravine, arrived, after about four hours' march, at a large pool of water, where the caravan was halted to allow the animals to get a drink and a rest. Then we pushed on again with the mules and horses. We had been gradually ascending all the way to the pool, and when we started again all hands had to turn to and help the camels to make their way up the steep mountain path, where the going was particularly bad for them; so that it was nine o'clock when we at last reached the top and pitched camp for the night.

We travelled next day through fine open country, rather mountainous but with splendid grazing for sheep or cattle. At a Samburu village, where we camped, the Natives brought me some milk, which was very acceptable, for my tea and coffee had run out long ago.

Our guide had now left us, and I steered next day for Mount Kenya. About noon we met some Kikuyu with food which they were going to trade with the Samburu for sheep; I, however, saved them the journey by buying it all up for ten sheep and engaging them to return with me as guides. During the day another horse and one of the camels died. I was satisfied that the former had died of horse-sickness; and bearing in mind the prevalent belief that that sickness

is due to the animals grazing before the due is off the grass, I resolved to be more careful in future that the horses were not led out to graze too early in the morning.

Next day we kept on our southerly course towards Mount Kenya, which had now been in view for some days. It felt quite home-like to be in sight of the old mountain again. We were travelling through the good grazing country now known as Laikipia, and during the day crossed a couple of rivers, tributaries of the Uaso Nyiro. My ill-luck still continued, for one of my best mules died on the march.

On Christmas Eve we continued our southerly march and pitched our camp near that of some white men who were catching ostriches. As I had to push on the next day, we all had our Christmas dinner together that night at their camp. After being so long cut off from white men, this little festivity was thoroughly enjoyed.

Christmas Day found us still on the march, for if I was to reach Nairobi by the New Year, I could not afford to lose any more time on the road. This was another unlucky day for me, no fewer than five horses being taken with the same sickness that had caused the previous deaths. I could not make out what was the matter. They were taken ill suddenly, and invariably died within a few hours. Four of the five died during the day, and reckoning that each would have fetched at least 400 rupees at Nairobi, I was 1,600 rupees out of pocket in one day. It seemed hard lines that these should be lost almost at the very end of the journey, after I had brought them so far in safety in spite of all the hardships of the road.

The next day we struck off west, in order to cross the plain and get into either Naivasha or the Kedong Valley. I was afraid to make for the Government station at Nyeri, because we should have had to pass through the bamboo forest, where the cold would almost certainly have killed all my camels.

Two more horses went down with the mysterious sickness next day, and knowing that recovery was hopeless, and being uncertain how far the complaint was infectious, I shot them both. A few hours later, meeting a number of Kikuyu traders with large stocks of tobacco for sale, I bought the whole lot — about a couple of hundred pounds altogether — for use as a disinfectant. Putting it all into a bath I soaked it well in water, and with the thick solution I rubbed the animals all over. In spite of all my precautions several more horses sickened, and two died during the march, so my disinfectant did not prove so successful as I had hoped.

Still going west, we crossed a high mountain, where we had a great deal of trouble to get the camels up the steep pathway. It was very cold during the night, and our expected rest was a good deal shortened by a stampede of all the horses and mules, for everybody had to turn out to get them back again. We did not succeed, however, in doing so that night. Everybody was out the first

thing next morning to look for the remaining animals. We succeeded in finding them all, and got on the road again. Our direction was south, past Rangatubu's, and we contented ourselves with a six hours' march, camping, for the last time, near a small river.

We reached Gilgil, a station on the Uganda Railway, on December 29. Here I was delayed for a week or ten days, as all animals brought into the Protectorate had to be examined by a veterinary surgeon. At the end of that time I was instructed to take the whole outfit over to the Government post at Naivasha, a good day's march farther down the line, where the Marlin test for glanders was successfully passed. As soon as they were certified fit to be sent to the market at Nairobi, I took the train for that place from Naivasha, finally arriving about the middle of January, 1907. I had been some nine months on the road, from the time that I arrived in Abyssinia. The caravan followed on by road, under the charge of Selland, and the accompanying extract from the " Globe-Trotter," a Nairobi newspaper of that period, relating to its arrival in the town, may be interesting:—

> " What a bizarre procession met the eye on Wednesday last " as the caravan belonging to John Boyes, composed of about " forty camels, ambled in their peculiarly eastern gait down " Government Road, each with some curio or other, but the " majority laden with ivory. An interesting and thrilling history " could be told of that ivory, no doubt, as many another expedi- " tion like the one just successfully brought to a conclusion by " John Boyes could tell. Africa is still the land of romance and " adventurous men, and the uncrowned king of the Kikuyus " is at the head. I wonder what sort of buccaneer he would have " made in the days of good old Queen Bess !"

On my arrival at Gilgil the first white man to greet me said, " Well, Boyes, you've been doing all right, hanging your Native interpreter !" I naturally thought that this was his idea of a joke, and that he was simply " pulling my leg "; but I found that it was generally believed, all through that part of the country, that I had hanged a man on my way up from Abyssinia. It appeared, on investigation, that the story related to my friend the Abyssinian headman, Bara Didi, who had deserted and laid a complaint of serious ill-treatment against me at the British Legation at Addis Ababa. Determining to scotch these reports once and for all, I took my boys before the magistrate at Nairobi, where ten of them made affidavits (which I now have in my possession) to the effect that Bara Didi's statement was absolutely untrue, and that I had always treated my boys well — most of them adding a statement that Bara Didi had always given me a good deal of trouble. This business cost me about £10 in fees, but I felt it absolutely necessary that these reports should be at once contradicted by the only people who could do so from personal knowledge, namely, the boys themselves.

On summing up the profits and losses of this trip, my net returns worked out at considerably over £1,000, which was pretty good for a little over nine months' work, considering my comparatively small initial outlay, and the heavy risks of total loss or catastrophe that I ran from the moment my party entered Abyssinia.

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